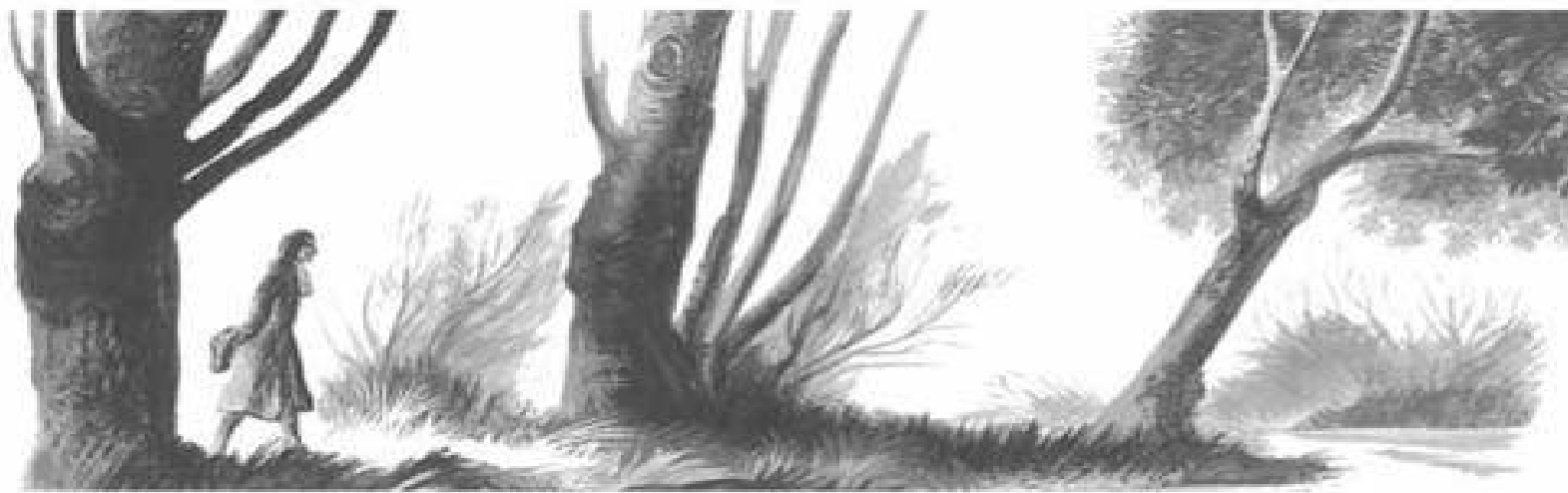


THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY

 HOLY LOVE *and the*
SHAPE OF GRACE



KENNETH J.
COLLINS

Abingdon Press
N a s h v i l l e

THE THEOLOGY
OF JOHN
WESLEY



HOLY LOVE *and the*
SHAPE OF GRACE



KENNETH J.
COLLINS

Abingdon Press
Nashville

THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY



HOLY LOVE *and the*
SHAPE OF GRACE



KENNETH J.
COLLINS

Abingdon Press
Nashville

THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY HOLY LOVE AND THE SHAPE OF GRACE

Copyright © 2007 by Abingdon Press

All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Abingdon Press, P.O. Box 801, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37202-0801; or to permissions@abingdonpress.com.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Collins, Kenneth J.

The theology of John Wesley : holy love and the shape of grace / Kenneth J. Collins.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-687-64633-3 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Wesley, John, 1703–1791. 2. Theology, Doctrinal. I. Title.

BX8495.W5C756 2007

230.7092—dc20

2007002006

All scripture quotations, unless noted otherwise, are taken from the *New Revised*

Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations noted KJV are taken from the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible.

08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For Colin

Contents

Introduction

John Wesley's Practical Divinity: A Theology of Holy Love

John Wesley as a Practical Theologian

The Style of Wesley's Practical Theology

The Axial Theme of Wesley's Practical Theology

The Axial Theme of Holiness and Grace

Holiness as Holy Love: The First Half of the Axial Theme

Law and Grace

Grace: The Other Half of the Axial Theme

Work of God Alone/Synergism

Favor/Empowerment

Receiving/Responding

Instantaneous/Process

The Flow of the Book

Chapter One

The God of Holy Love

The Personal and Essential Attributes of God

Holy Love

Eternity

Omnipresence

Omniscience

Omnipotence

The Essential Attributes and Predestination

The Work of God/Father

Creator

Sovereign

Governor

The Moral Law

Providential Provider

Summary of the Attributes

Today and Tomorrow: Recent Trends in Cosmology

Chapter Two

Humanity: Created in Holy Love, Fallen in Nature

Humanity Created as Complex Beings

The Image of God

The Fall of Humanity

The Effects of the Fall

Original Sin

How Original Sin Is Transferred

The Consequences of Original Sin

Total Depravity

Prevenient Grace

The Benefits of Prevenient Grace

Today and Tomorrow: Contemporary Views of the Self

Chapter Three

Jesus Christ: The God of Holy Love Revealed

The Person of Christ

The Divine Nature

The Human Nature

The Work of Christ

Prophet

Priest

Atonement

Objective Elements

Subjective Elements

King

Today and Tomorrow: The Christ of the Qur'an

Chapter Four

The Holy Spirit: The Presence of the God of Holy Love

Administrator of Redemption

Convincing Grace

The Moral Law

The Presence of the Spirit as Holy Love

The Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit

[The Assurance of the Holy Spirit](#)
[Assurance Nuanced](#)
[The Full Assurance of Faith](#)
[The Question of a Specialized Vocabulary](#)
[The Full Assurance of Hope](#)
[The Perceptibility of Grace](#)
[The Trinity](#)
[The Filioque Clause](#)
[Wesley on Trinitarian Language](#)
[The Trinity and the Language of Holy Love](#)
[Today and Tomorrow: The Rise of Pentecostal Religion](#)

Chapter Five

Justification: The God of Holy Love for Us
[Co-operant Grace \(Catholic Emphasis\)](#)
[Repentance](#)
[Works Suitable for Repentance](#)
[The Necessity of Repentance and Works Suitable Thereto](#)
[Free Grace \(Protestant Emphasis\)](#)
[Justifying Faith](#)
[Justification Itself: The First Focus of the Wesleyan Order of Salvation](#)
[Justification as Freedom from Guilt: The First Liberty of the Gospel](#)
[Imputation](#)
[The Question of *Sola Fide*](#)
[Justification and Regeneration Are Linked](#)
[The Difference between Acceptance and Justification](#)
[Temporal Elements as the Key](#)
[Today and Tomorrow: The Realities of Forgiveness](#)

Chapter Six

The New Birth: The God of Holy Love in Us
[Regenerating Grace as the Favor of God](#)
[Regenerating Grace as the Power of God](#)
[The Contribution of Peter Böhler](#)
[Defining Regeneration](#)
[The New Birth as a Necessary Change](#)
[The New Birth as a Vast Change](#)

[The Influence of German Pietism](#)

[The New Birth as a Crucial Change](#)

[The Contribution of August Hermann Francke](#)

[The Temporal Elements as Key](#)

[The New Birth as Liberating Change: The Second Liberty of the Gospel](#)

[Did Wesley Maintain His Standard of the New Birth?](#)

[The New Birth as the Freedom to Love God and Neighbor](#)

[Today and Tomorrow: Conversion Revisited](#)

Chapter Seven

The Church and the Means of Grace: The Community of Holy Love

[The Church](#)

[The Church in Decline](#)

[Methodism as a Reform of the Church](#)

[The Significance of German Pietism and Moravianism](#)

[The Methodist Infrastructure](#)

[The Practical Christian Life](#)

[The Means of Grace](#)

[The Instituted Means of Grace](#)

[The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper](#)

[The Sacrament of Baptism](#)

[Prudential Means of Grace](#)

[Works of Mercy](#)

[Today and Tomorrow: What Are They Thinking about Natural Law and Politics?](#)

Chapter Eight

Entire Sanctification: The Purity and Excellence of Holy Love

[Evangelical Repentance](#)

[Works Suitable for Repentance](#)

[Faith](#)

[The Balance of Wesley's Conception of Grace](#)

[The Temporal Dimensions of Entire Sanctification](#)

[Entire Sanctification Itself: The Second Focus of the Wesleyan Order of Salvation](#)

[What Entire Sanctification Is Not](#)

[What Entire Sanctification Is: The Third Liberty of the Gospel](#)

[The Full Assurance of Faith](#)

[Pastoral Considerations on the Way to Eternity](#)

[Today and Tomorrow: Rethinking the Wesleyan *Ordo Salutis*?](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Eschatology and Glorification: The Triumph of Holy Love](#)

[Revivalism and Millennialism](#)

[Eschatology and the Reign of God](#)

[Death](#)

[The Intermediate State](#)

[Resurrection and Judgment](#)

[Final Justification](#)

[The Question of Merit](#)

[The New Creation](#)

[Today and Tomorrow: John Wesley's Practical Theology as a Resource for
Discipleship and Service](#)

[Notes](#)

[Selected Bibliography](#)

[Index](#)

I have been blessed by a wide-ranging conversation in Wesley studies over the years and therefore would like to thank especially Dr. Richard P. Heitzenrater and Dr. Herbert McGonigle for their very helpful counsel in all things Methodist.

Introduction

John Wesley's Practical Divinity: A Theology of Holy Love

It was the late Albert Outler, dean of Methodist historians, who first posed the seminal question of the Wesleyan tradition back in 1961 when he called for a reappraisal of the status of John Wesley as a theologian.² Arguing that Wesley not only was a major theologian in his own right, but that his theological methodology and motifs were remarkably significant for contemporary theology,³ Outler initiated an engaging conversation that is still with us today. Yet in his early work, though he was very appreciative of the Methodist tradition, one detects a hesitancy on Outler's part simply to rank Wesley with the theologians of other communions of faith and he, therefore, cautioned his readers that Wesley was "no theological titan, no system builder, no theologian's theologian. . . . By design and intent he was a folk theologian."⁴

During the 1970s Outler continued to portray Wesley as a folk theologian who, unlike Luther and the Halle Pietists, had no academic base, and who, unlike Calvin and Knox, had no political base.⁵ Indeed, outside the Methodist tradition, Wesley largely went unnoticed by historical theologians since the eighteenth-century leader was not a "theologian's theologian, partly because he belonged to no single school and founded none."⁶ By the following decade, Outler was still describing Wesley as a folk theologian, but by this time, this leading scholar had gained a new appreciation for the relevance of Wesley's way of doing theology for the contemporary church with its emphasis on both mission and praxis.

John Wesley as a Practical Theologian

Remarkably enough, Wesley himself does not seem to have used our preferred and well-worked term *theology* but referred instead to "various ⁷ To illustrate, in his own writings, whether they be letters, addresses, or the prefaces to published works, Wesley employed the terms "practical," "speculative," "controversial," "positive," "comparative," "mystic," and even the phrase "plain old Bible divinity" to articulate the full range of theological reflection. Of this use, the terminology of "practical divinity" clearly predominates, and it was employed to describe not only Wesley's *A Christian Library*, which consisted of "Extracts and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity,"⁸ but also the much beloved *A Collection of Hymns of the People Called Methodists*.⁹

In other instances Wesley used the terms "experimental divinity" and "practical divinity" almost interchangeably, suggesting something of the large role that experience played in his theology.¹⁰ Observe, however, that experimental knowledge in this setting, based upon sense experience, must be distinguished from Lockean notions, at least in some respects, since such knowledge cannot be publicly verified with respect to an "objective" observer. Put another way, experimental or practical divinity is participatory and engaging. It entails nothing less than the actualization and verification of the truths of Scripture with respect to inward religion (by grace through faith) within the context of the Christian community. That is, for Wesley, practical divinity was the gracious means whereby people could "test the truths of scripture for themselves."¹¹ And such knowledge, as Thorsen aptly points out, was never purely psychological or subjective, because believers genuinely came "into contact with an objective, albeit empirically hidden, reality."¹² So understood, faith, the fruit of grace, becomes the seeing eye and the hearing ear that receives and embraces the divine mystery and presence. Again, it is the totality of the Christian life, in all its various dimensions, both public and private, heart and mind, personal and social, that attests to the truth of Scripture.

Such an approach to theology, then, gave Wesley, much like the patristic writers, a decidedly scriptural orientation. That is, the truth of Scripture must be actualized, operationalized in increasing Christlikeness in both personal life and in the broader community. Frederick McDonald of an earlier era contended that Wesley was "essentially a Biblical theologian."¹³ More recently the late Frank

Baker explored the substance of Wesley's practical divinity not only by discerning its genius in earlier models in Anglican divinity (where the Caroline divines Jeremy Taylor and Lancelot Andrews played a considerable role) but also by noting that the one-time Oxford don had in reality become a specialist in the doctrines of sin and salvation, whereby he took very seriously "the cure of souls."¹⁴

Beyond this, current scholarship suggests that Wesley's practical divinity is clearly a viable way of doing theology in its orientation to the mission of the church, in its attentiveness to the realization of scriptural truth, and in its service to the poor. And so when Outler made the claim many years ago that Wesley was "the most important Anglican theologian in his century,"¹⁵ we must not mistake this claim for the assertion that Wesley was a systematic theologian or that he had attempted to synthesize all human knowledge and to demonstrate its unity in Christ in a thoroughgoing way. On the contrary, Wesley's practical divinity, fleshed out in a very Anglican way in sermons, liturgy, prayers, creeds, occasional pieces, journals, and letters, had a decidedly soteriological, rather than epistemological, orientation. This much more focused interest, which actually precludes the grand *speculative* organizing principle, is evident in Wesley's preface to his *Sermons on Several Occasions*, in which he observes: I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven, with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavored to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not.¹⁶

So then, as a practical rather than a speculative theologian, Wesley spoke of time and eternity and of things present and things to come and offered the glad tidings of salvation, even to the very least of all.

The Style of Wesley's Practical Theology

Though the theology of John Wesley is not characterized by a grand systematic principle in the way that Paul Tillich employed his method of correlation¹⁷ and Emil Brunner his paradigm of divine/human correspondence,¹⁸ nevertheless within Wesley's more restricted soteriological interests, that is, within his ongoing concern for practical divinity, there does indeed emerge what Outler has called an axial theme around which all subsidiary doctrines are focused.¹⁹ More to the point, Wesley's soteriological axial theme is displayed in the context of his order of salvation where it finds both its outworking and its ongoing coherence. However, before the formal element of the axial theme of Wesley's practical theology can be considered in any detail, it is important to indicate something of the *style* of Wesley's many theological reflections, a style that is actually suggestive of his preferred axis.

In many ways an Anglican theologian, Wesley evidenced a moderating sensibility, a tendency to avoid one-sided readings in his many theological reflections. That is, attempting to find what Outler has called "a third alternative" to Pelagian optimism and Augustinian pessimism,²⁰ Wesley developed a theological style that not only was sophisticated in its attempt to hold a diversity of truths in tension, but also has on occasion puzzled his interpreters, both past and present, precisely because of that diversity. Indeed, treatments of Wesley that have viewed him principally through the lens of some preferred theological *tradition* abound: Calvinism for Cell, Lutheran Pietism for Hildebrandt, Puritanism for Rupp, and the Eastern Fathers for Maddox.²¹ And though interesting and engaging, each one of these interpretations yet falters in failing to reckon with the diversity, the sheer "otherness" of the panoply of elements—beyond the bounds of discrete theological traditions—that were actually factored into Wesley's practical theological reflections. This diverse and eclectic style, whereby numerous apparently contradictory truths were held in tension, was so basic to Wesley's overall theological disposition that Outler has actually claimed that it "amounts to a special method all its own."²²

Such a style of theological reflection, sophisticated and well nuanced in many respects, has resulted in the designation that Wesley was a "conjunctive" theologian.²³ Thus, the most able and consistent interpretations of Wesley's theology have realized that it is ever a matter of "both/and" and not "either/or."

Indeed, the intricate theological synthesis that Wesley painstakingly crafted held together the grand project of much of his theological career, namely, the task of articulating "faith alone" and "holy living." Outler observes:

It is easy for us to miss the originality of this Wesleyan view of faith alone and holy living *held together*. Here was a great evangelist preaching up *sola fide* and, at the very same time, teaching his converts to go on to perfection and to expect it *in this life*! His critics were quick to notice this strange move and to seize upon it as proof of Wesley's inconsistency. Actually, it was yet another of Wesley's characteristic "third alternatives"—maybe his most original one.²⁴

Other conjunctions in Wesley's theology, emblematic of his third way, include law and gospel, grace and works, grace as both favor and empowerment, justification and sanctification, instantaneousness and process, the universality of grace (prevenient) and its limited (saving) actualization, divine initiative and human response, as well as initial and final justification. Wesley may not have been a systematic theologian in the modern sense of the term; nevertheless, his theological style suggests something of his sophistication in the area of practical divinity.

The Axial Theme of Wesley's Practical Theology

While Wesley's style of theology is clearly important and is suggestive of the form of much of his theological reflection, we do not believe, as Outler has maintained, that it constitutes a method in its own right. For one thing, due to its very general nature, a style of theology lacks the explanatory power of an axial theme. That is, an axial theme is far more methodologically significant and can be distinguished from a style of a theology, in some important ways, especially in that it specifies a soteriological leitmotif that serves an integrating role in light of which other key doctrines are best understood. So conceived, an axial theme not only provides the appropriate theological context in which one must proceed, but also offers clues as to the nature of Wesley's pastoral style as he *practiced* theology in a diversity of settings in the eighteenth century.

Outler has suggested that grace itself is the axial theme of Wesley's theology, the focus of all his thinking.²⁵ And Maddox, for his part, in a slight variation on Outler's work, has maintained that it is "responsible grace" that is the lodestar of all.²⁶ Now, though these two offerings are indeed illuminative of Wesley's overall theology and have significant explanatory power, they nevertheless, in our judgment, do not adequately encompass the diversity and richness inherent in Wesley's axial theme and, as a consequence, are not descriptive of Wesley's preferred theological *style*. In other words, to view grace, apart from other theological concerns, as *the* motif or axial theme of Wesley's theology may actually be more descriptive of the modern setting and its preferences and judgments than of the eighteenth century.

The Axial Theme of Holiness and Grace

In contradistinction to this recent scholarship, we would like to offer that the conjunctive flavor of Wesley's theology is actually embedded in his preferred axial theme or orienting concern, which is not simply grace but holiness *and* grace, an axial theme that, due to its variegated nature, is indicative of Wesley's nearly lifelong theological project of articulating *holiness* and *sola fide*. Moreover, so extensive was Wesley's *style* of doing practical theology that even in terms of this axial theme of holiness and grace, each element itself is made up of yet another significant, though at times neglected, conjunction. Accordingly, the term "holiness," as Wesley employed it throughout his writings, is actually a summary expression and is indicative of the conjunction, even tension, of holy/love. In a similar way, Wesley's understanding of grace, the other pole of the axial theme, was viewed not simply in a monological way but once again in a conjunctive way, in which it emerged in the tension of free/co-operant grace. The following chart displays the basic and proper relations.

The Axial Theme of Wesley's Practical Theology	
Holiness	Grace
Holy/Love	Free/Co-operant (Responsible)

Holiness as Holy Love: The First Half of the Axial Theme

Though Wesley often simply employed the term "holiness" to describe the end or goal of the Christian life, nevertheless, at key points in his writings, he broke out this language into the elements of *holy love*. For example, in a variation of the truth found in Hebrews 12:14 ("Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."), Wesley, in a letter to "John Smith" in 1745, observes: "God would first, by this inspiration of his Spirit, have wrought in our hearts that holy love without which none can enter into glory."²⁷ And when Wesley considers how the moral law is established by faith in his sermon "Justification by Faith," he notes that this law is none other than the "law of love, the holy love of God and of our neighbor."²⁸ Beyond this, in displaying the vital role of faith in the process of redemption, Wesley points out elsewhere that it is "the grand means of restoring that holy love wherein man was originally created. . . . It leads to that end—the establishing anew the law of love in our hearts."²⁹ And numerous other examples of Wesley's specific use of the phrase "holy love" could be cited.³⁰

So then, if by the use of the term "holiness," Wesley implicitly had in mind holy love, then it is important to discern not only what holiness means in relation to love but also what love means with respect to holiness. Concerning the first aspect of this salient conjunction, Thomas Oord and Michael Lodahl argue that the "classical terms of holiness— 'Christian perfection,' 'entire sanctification,' 'the second blessing,' and 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'—no longer seize the imaginations of many people."³¹ In light of this, these scholars attempt to rethink the traditional language of holiness and to present the core of the Christian message in new ways in order to "seize our hearts and imaginations."³² To be sure, the careful contextualization of Wesley's language with respect to holiness is needed for subsequent ages and for diverse locales. However, in this worthy project, Oord and Lodahl essentially end up with a definition of holiness that in our estimation does not properly encapsulate Wesley's own best thinking on the matter. For though Wesley considered simplicity and purity to be "the essence of Christian holiness,"³³ Oord and Lodahl reject this understanding, judging it to be static and not relational enough, and they therefore prefer to maintain that "love is the heart of holiness."³⁴

Granted, holiness is intimately connected to love in Wesley's theology, but the two terms are not virtually identical as Oord and Lodahl seem to suggest. Otherwise we would end up with a basic tautology along the lines that love (holiness) equals love. But holiness actually brings something to the phrase "holy love" that the simple mention of the term "love" does not. Moreover, it keeps believers from misunderstanding *divine* love, mistaking it for what is all too human. In fact, the terms "holiness" and "love," as Wesley employed them, represent two distinct classes of words: the one indirectly relational, expressing the quality of a relationship; the other directly so. Thus, Wesley's view of holiness as purity represents a *qualitative* designation that reveals the integrity and the beauty of the relations of love. "Holiness is covered glory," Wesley notes, "and glory is uncovered holiness."³⁵

Furthermore, if the descriptive, delimiting, and uncanny (numinous) power of the term "holiness" is not brought to bear on love, illuminating it in a distinct way, setting it apart from other uses of the word "love," then it is not very likely that the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ, especially in its most humble forms at the cross, is under consideration. Again, without the qualitative distinctiveness of holiness as Wesley understood it, a love so conceived is likely to be informed by self-will, sentimentality, or what human reason itself judges to be both good and acceptable. By setting up a tautology and a basic equivalence between the terms "holiness" and "love," this recent rethinking fails to discern the conjunction, even the tension, implied in these two different terms as Wesley himself had employed them.

Current word studies of the term "holy" reveal that it is the opposite of the word "profane" and that it, therefore, entails a movement of separation, precisely for the sake of purity. Such an understanding falls hard on the modern ear with its preference for inclusion. During the twentieth century, however, Emil Brunner, Swiss dialectical theologian, expressed this same idea of separation in his observation: "The Holiness of God is therefore not only an absolute difference of nature, but it is an active self-differentiation, the willed energy with which God asserts and maintains the fact that He is Wholly other against all else."³⁶ Or as Richard Taylor put it more recently: "There is a moral intensity in God's holiness that makes tolerance of unholiness an impossibility."³⁷ And yet love, for its part, involves a movement of revelation, engagement, and, at its highest levels, communion. Again, love is outgoing, embracing, and inclusive. It is "the movement which goes-out-of-oneself, which stoops down to that which is below: it is the self-giving, the selfcommunication of God."³⁸ Consequently, as

Wesley, Brunner, Taylor, and others have known so well, the term "holy love" is not a simple and straightforward expression but involves a conjunction that is expressed in the ideas of separation for the sake of purity and communion for the sake of love. Both, therefore, must be held in tension, not one to the neglect of the other. As such, the best and most accurate summarizing word or phrase, and Wesley's ultimate hermeneutic, is not "love," as has sometimes been argued, but "holy love."

Moreover, just as holiness informs love, so, too, does love inform holiness. Indeed, according to Wesley, "no true Christian holiness can exist without the love of God for its foundation."³⁹ Thus, in his sermon "The Witness of the Spirit, I," Wesley maintains that we must love God first "before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness."⁴⁰ And this love of God that is so intimately connected to holiness, giving it form, is implanted in human hearts and is evident among the community of the faithful through the gracious agency of the Holy Spirit. That is, believers are "led into every holy desire, into every divine and heavenly temper,"⁴¹ Wesley points out, by the Holy Spirit who "sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts, and the love of all mankind."⁴²

Now it is precisely because love and holiness are so closely connected in Wesley's practical theology, almost in a dialectical fashion, that frameworks, such as the distinction between the juridical (justification) and the participatory (sanctification), may be inappropriately applied at times and in a way that fails to discern the proper relations between love, holiness, and justification. Thus, for example, in Wesley's estimation, "the abiding love of God,"⁴³ the root of all holiness, "cannot spring but from faith in a pardoning God."⁴⁴ Indeed, justifying faith, a forensic theme, implies among other things "a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, that he *loved* me, and gave himself for me."⁴⁵ For what is justifying, saving faith, Wesley asks, "but a confidence in God through Christ, that loved me, and gave himself for me."⁴⁶ Indeed, Wesley draws the connection between the love of God and justification repeatedly in his writings and in his observation that "a divine evidence or conviction that Christ loved *me* and gave Himself for *me* is essential to if not the very essence of justifying faith."⁴⁷ Simply put, just as the love of God is the source of holiness so, too, is it the source of justification.

If, however, holiness (or justification for that matter) were understood apart from the outgoing love of God that ever seeks fellowship and communion, then it could easily become the bricks and mortar of an all-too-human, dour religion

in which separation for the sake of purity would lead to isolation and indifference; the holy law of God as an expression of the will of the Most High would be displaced by rules, resolutions, and cultural taboos; and the purpose of fellowship and community, the love of God and neighbor, would easily be lost in self-preoccupation and spiritual narcissism. Again, love apart from holiness is soft, naively wishful, and likely self-indulgent. Holiness apart from love is a consuming fire. And so with respect to the first half of Wesley's orienting concern of holiness and grace, holiness itself is best understood as implying a conjunction of holy love, an artful balance that ably describes not only the divine nature but also the earnest Christian life itself.

Law and Grace

Wesley's axial theme of holiness and grace is amply particularized in the well-worked subsidiary conjunction of law and grace, a conjunction that has been the concern of so much of Western theology hailing from the Reformation. Therefore, the most historically accurate and descriptive readings of Wesley's theology must explore the outworking of the moral law, in conjunction with grace, within the context of the full range of Wesley's theological interests and pastoral responsibilities. In this labor, Wesley's own social location is obviously crucial, and it should come as no surprise to learn that in terms of the numerous sources that informed his understanding of the moral law, Wesley, once again, looked largely to his own Anglican tradition. Indeed, it is likely that the teachings of the Cambridge Platonists such as John Norris and John Smith informed Wesley's reflections about the moral law and helped him see it in a "platonic" sense as a "copy of the eternal mind . . . the visible beauty of the Most High."⁴⁸

Moreover, in a way that might have surprised Bishop Lavington, given the nature of his criticism, it was John Wesley himself, who believed it was often the particular problem of Protestants, of "gospel preachers" as he termed them, to proclaim the grace of God largely in an unbalanced, fanatical, antinomian fashion; that is, apart from the illuminating and guiding power of the moral law. So conceived, grace would soon become amorphous, lacking the form of "the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created,"⁴⁹ and therefore would be able to support almost any self-driven or "enthusiastic" notion or practice. To counter this insidious error, Wesley held that grace is most often "normed" grace. In other words, it arises and flowers in a valuational, prescriptive context and is illuminated by the moral law of God, a standard that transcends, at least in some respects, both human will and desire as well as, on a group level, the enslaving ethnocentricity, the rank tribalism, of various communities. Again, without this other half of the *conjunction*, so to speak, an axial theme simply of grace would perhaps quickly devolve into presumption, self-will, sentimentality, or, worse yet, the antinomianism that Wesley so rightly deplored. To prevent this theological malady among his own preachers, Wesley issued a set of instructions in 1751 in which he made the moral law both the initial and the chief vehicle for convincing sinners.⁵⁰ And to the claim that grace

or the gospel answers all the ends of the law, thereby rendering the preaching of the latter unnecessary, Wesley replied: "But this we utterly deny. It [the gospel] does not answer the very first end of the law, namely, the convincing men of sin. . . . The ordinary method of God is to convict sinners by the law, and that only."⁵¹

Earlier, at the first Methodist Conference in 1744, Wesley had advised his helpers and assistants to preach Christ in all his offices and "to declare his law *as well as* his gospel, both to believers and unbelievers."⁵² In this counsel, then, the moral law holds great value not only in convicting sinners but also in keeping believers in Christ. That is, Wesley highlighted both the *accusatory* role of the law, in a way similar to Luther,⁵³ as well as the *prescriptive* role of this same law, in a way similar to Calvin;⁵⁴ the one to *bring* sinners to Christ; the other to *keep* believers alive in the Lord.

For Wesley, then, obedience to God through the moral law *is* required in the practical Christian life, not of course as the condition of acceptance, but in order to *continue* in the rich grace of God.⁵⁵ And that Wesley did indeed develop a formal prescriptive use of the moral law—the *tertius usus*—is evident in his observation: "Each is continually sending me to the other—the law to Christ, and Christ to the law."⁵⁶ Simply put, obedience to God through the moral law does not establish the Christian life, but it is a necessary fruit of that faith that both justifies and regenerates. If, for example, faith does not issue in obedience to God through the moral law, and in works of charity and mercy, it was clear to Wesley, at least, that such is a dead and not a living faith; it is a faith that is not being acted out in the world of God and neighbor. Again, law and grace, reflective of the broader axial theme of holiness and grace, is constitutive of Wesley's practical theology. Indeed, it is this major and carefully developed conjunction that reveals the adequacy of his theological formulations.

Grace: The Other Half of the Axial Theme

The dynamic and intricate axial theme of Wesley's theology embraces, of course, not simply holiness (and the moral law) but grace as well. And just as holiness was explicated in terms of the conjunction of holy/love so, too, is grace the summary of a number of key conjunctions in Wesley's theology as the following chart indicates:

The Conjunctions of Grace	
Free Grace	Co-operant Grace (Responsible)
The Work of God Alone	Divine/Human Co-operation (Synergism)
Highlights Favor	Divine/Human Co-operation (Synergism)
Receiving	Responding
Instantaneous	Process
Protestant Emphasis	Catholic Emphasis

Work of God Alone/Synergism

It has often been claimed that Wesley's practical theology, as a species of a broader Arminianism, underscores the importance of co-operant grace, in which both God and humanity ever work together in the process of redemption. And some recent treatments of Wesley's theology employ the image of a dance precisely to convey this sense of grace.⁵⁷ Although this image of partnership, with stress on divine initiative, is indeed helpful in exploring some aspects of Wesley's theology, it nevertheless does not represent the full range of Wesley's understanding of grace, nor is it, therefore, descriptive once again of his preferred theological style. That is, not only did Wesley view grace as co-operant, as reflected, for example, in his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," but also he considered grace, in a very *conjunctive* way, as indicative of divine favor and therefore, in a real sense, as the work of God *alone*, especially in his sermon "Free Grace." As such, grace "does not in any wise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has *done*, or anything he *is*."⁵⁸ Here the Protestant heritage of Reformation Anglicanism and the insights of Moravians and German Pietists streamed into Wesley's theology, bringing much-needed balance. To be sure, it is precisely grace as the *sole* activity of God that an unswervingly synergist or "catholic" model, in its preference for cooperation and process, is unable to acknowledge in a thoroughgoing way. And yet Wesley forthrightly exclaimed: "We allow, it is the work of God *alone* to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify; which three comprehend the whole of salvation."⁵⁹ Consequently, more accurate readings of Wesley's theology suggest that a synergistic paradigm, which contains both divine and human acting, must itself be caught up in an *even larger conjunction* in which the Protestant emphasis on the sole activity of God, apart from all human working, is *equally* factored in.

Favor/Empowerment

A second conjunction imbedded in Wesley's broad conception of grace concerns the issues of divine favor and empowerment. Thus, Wesley first of all considered grace as the "undeserved favor" of God: "All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of his mere grace, bounty, or favour: his free, undeserved favour, favour altogether undeserved."⁶⁰ So understood, the Most High is never in humanity's debt, but lavishes good will and favor upon all creatures. In fact, "it is the sheer givenness of spiritual insight and of divine grace," as Outler points out, "that distinguishes Wesley from Pelagius—and for that matter, from Arminius and Episcopius."⁶¹ That is, God's grace, in some senses, is already present even before it is fully acknowledged or appreciated. Prevenience, then, is not only suggestive of divine favor but also underscores grace as a gift.

Moreover, Wesley's considerable readings in the broad catholic tradition (Anglican, Roman, and Greek),⁶² that emphasized participation in and empowerment through the life of God, helped him see grace in yet another way, as the "*power* of the Holy Ghost"⁶³ to enable people to walk in the ways of God. In this context, grace is wonderfully enabling; it is the salvific strength of the Almighty mediated to believers by nothing less than the *presence* of the Holy Spirit. As Outler points out in his introduction to Wesley's sermons, "The 'catholic substance' of Wesley's theology is the theme of *participation*—the idea that all life is of grace and all grace is the mediation of Christ by the Holy Spirit."⁶⁴ Consequently, grace, for Wesley, not only involves declaring sinners to be just out of the bountiful favor of God, but also entails actually transforming, assisting, and renewing their hearts in holiness as well.

When theologians reckon with these two senses of grace that are such an integral part of Wesley's practical theology, they often map them along a juridical/therapeutic axis.⁶⁵ In this scheme, grace as divine favor principally corresponds to the juridical theme of justification, and grace as divine, enabling power corresponds to the participatory themes of regeneration and entire sanctification. Such a framework, however, in its broad-stroke assessment, does not accurately describe the intricate nature and subtleties of Wesley's practical theology as chapters 5 and 6 will illustrate. For example, although it is well known that Peter Böhler, the young Moravian leader, reacquainted Wesley with

the basic truth of his own Anglican Church, namely, that justification represents the bountiful *favor* of God and therefore is received by grace through faith, what is less known perhaps is that Böhler also taught Wesley that regeneration or the new birth, though a "participatory" theme, nevertheless also represents nothing less than the bountiful *favor* of the Most High and therefore is received by grace through faith. In other words, the new birth (and entire sanctification for that matter) is a sheer, utter gift and represents the favor of a God of holy love who lavishes such gifts upon those who believe. Coming from his Georgia experience, during which he had tried to manage his ascent into holiness through rule, resolution, and sincerity, Wesley looked upon the Moravian teaching that justification as well as regeneration were both gracious boons of God and therefore were to be received by faith alone, as nothing less than a "new gospel."[66](#)

Receiving/Responding

Paradigms in theology can function, at times, as metanarratives; that is, as preferred, exclusive ways of assessing a number of theological elements. The challenge, then, for interpreters of Wesley's very eclectic theology is to recognize, after a serious reading of the entire corpus, that his practical theology does not neatly fit under any one particular paradigm whether catholic or protestant. In the past, however, and even today, Wesley's theology has most often been subsumed under some overarching synergistic model. For example, the late William Cannon pointed out that "Wesley describes salvation as synergistic: it is a cooperative endeavor between God and a human being."⁶⁷ And more recently, Maddox argues that synergistic co-operation is necessary for receiving the new birth: "For Wesley it was instead our responsiveness to God's offer of restored pardoning relationship (Justification) that induces the gracious further regeneration of our human faculties in the New Birth."⁶⁸ And though this last scholar distinguishes responsible grace from co-operant grace in the sense that the former places an emphasis on the divine initiative, co-operant grace in its best sense has always done this. However, what a synergistic model does not allow for, and what nevertheless was very much a part of Wesley's full-orbed theology, drawing upon insights from the Reformation, was a place for the activity of God *alone* as noted earlier.

With the conjunction of both a catholic synergistic paradigm and a Protestant one, Wesley was not only able to affirm the importance of responding to divine initiatives in the process of redemption, but he could also stress the value of waiting upon the Lord and *receiving* what are the gifts of God alone. That is, believers must receive *first* before they can respond. And this receiving (whether it be the crucial, qualitatively distinct graces of justification, regeneration, or entire sanctification) is not really a human "work" at all but is an openness, *almost* in a passive sense, that preserves the integrity of personhood in its measure of freedom (rejecting all forms of determinism) in order to receive what gifts are given not on the basis of prior co-operation but on the basis of the merits of Christ alone. This very careful balance of Wesley's theology represents, in a real sense, one of his more important third alternatives; that is, grace is to be understood not exclusively either in terms of Geneva or Rome (or Constantinople for that matter) but in terms of both.

Instantaneous/Process

Although the temporal dimensions of Wesley's practical theology in general and his understanding of grace in particular are often explored simply in a chronological way, closer examination of Wesley's rhetoric, that is, his specific employment of language, reveals that these same dimensions should also, more importantly, be considered in a soteriological way; that is, as a reflection of the larger issue of faith and works. Indeed, the instantaneous elements of Wesley's *ordo salutis*⁶⁹ are his principal vehicles for underscoring not only grace as the *favor* of God but also the crucial truth that it is the Almighty, not humanity, who both forgives sins and makes holy. Again, temporal elements not only indicate soteriological roles but also underscore the divine gracious activity. By way of analogy, then, observe Wesley's language in his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation" as he demonstrates that temporal elements (with respect to entire sanctification) are expressive of the relation between faith and works. He states: And by this token may you surely know whether you seek it by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done first, before you are sanctified. You think, "I must first be or do thus or thus." Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it as you are: and if as you are, then expect it *now*.⁷⁰

This means, of course, that interpretations of Wesley's doctrine of salvation, which identify the juridical aspects of redemption (justification or forgiveness) as instantaneous, and the therapeutic aspect (sanctification) as simply processive, are again wide of the mark. Indeed, Wesley's doctrine of redemption is much more intricate than this categorization can allow. Broadly understood, sanctification is characterized by both process *and* instantaneousness, for the new birth (as with entire sanctification) not only must embrace process, both before and after, but also must, to use Wesley's own words, "have a first moment."⁷¹ Such a soteriological moment not only underscores the actualization—the instantiation—of regeneration in a chronological way, but also, and perhaps more important, highlights the utter graciousness of this gift in a soteriological way, that in a real sense it is the work of God *alone*. Simply put, the catholic paradigm can illuminate the *process* leading up to entire sanctification while the protestant paradigm in its stress upon actualization and instantiation illuminates entire sanctification itself. And it is precisely the

blending of these senses that is most indicative of the views of the seasoned Wesley.

In light of the preceding observations, it should be evident by now that George Croft Cell's earlier dictum, "The Wesleyan reconstruction of the Christian ethic of life is an original and unique synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness,"⁷² is not quite accurate in our estimation. For not only did Wesley embrace both Protestant (free) and Catholic (co-operant, responsible) conceptions of grace, but also he was remarkably diverse in his understanding of holiness, a holy love that was informed not simply by Catholic resources, by eastern and western fathers for example, but also by Protestant ones, especially Anglicans and German Pietists. And this complex and carefully nuanced employment of the resources of church tradition is part of the larger story that will be detailed in the pages ahead.

The Flow of the Book

In the midst of the various readings of Wesley's theology available today, we must not only take into account the artifacts of history, in terms of texts and theological traditions, but must also carefully discern how these elements are employed by interpreters to tell a story, to construct a distinct and artful narrative, that will always be a function, at least to some extent, of their own contemporary social location. Historiography, then, in this context means that there are different ways of exploring Wesley's theological narrative and that we must, therefore, be attentive to all that makes up that difference, both in terms of an eighteenth-century world and a twenty-first-century one—and all of this so that Wesley's own theological voice will remain clear and distinct.

In light of these concerns, we would like to offer a heuristic framework that can empower us to get at the heart of John Wesley's theology today. It is a framework that is inclusive not exclusive, and it, therefore, embraces three worlds. The first world is that of the text itself, that is, Wesley's own writings in their eighteenth-century context, in terms of letters, journals, diaries, hymns, and theological treatises. Here the task of the historian and theologian is not simply to ascertain the text, in what looks like lower criticism, but also to take note of its language, motifs, themes, and rhetorics, in what looks like literary criticism. Moreover, in this first world, what Wesley said may be far more important than what Wesley read.

The second world, which corresponds to historical criticism, examines the traditional and historical sources that fed into Wesley's own theological reflections. Here the writings of Eastern Fathers, Puritans, Cambridge Platonists, Caroline Divines, and Moravian and German Pietists, as well as those from Wesley's own Anglican tradition, all come into play. Now, though this second world is clearly important in fleshing out the "elusive Mr. Wesley," to borrow a phrase from Heitzenrater, interpretations may quickly go awry at this level simply because the major cues for interpreting Wesley's theology may actually be drawn not from his own theological context but from a preferred theological tradition, whatever that might be. Put another way, what should have been a useful lens of interpretation may—through an engaging typology—actually become the focus itself, now functioning as an overlay of Wesley's diverse and remarkably sophisticated appropriation of tradition.

The third world is akin to theological criticism, and it not only takes the

social and historical location of Wesley's theology into account, as a proper and necessary concern of interpretation, but also attempts to bridge the gap between the eighteenth century and the twenty-first century. To be sure, not all of what Wesley believed and taught can be brought forward into our current setting without some form of translation, certainly not in terms of his educational practices with respect to children, to cite just one example. In a real sense, we are simply at a different place, so to speak, than John Wesley was in terms of his anthropology. Theological criticism, drawing from some of the insights of social science, for example, takes that difference into account and renders it intelligible.

In light of these observations, the first two worlds, with emphasis on the first—that is, Wesley's own primary source writings—will make up much of the content of the chapters ahead. Cognizant of Wesley's own preferred theological vocabulary, we will point out important themes and motifs and demonstrate that, on this level, a remarkable continuity emerges over time. Beyond this, special care will be taken in terms of the third world, showing the relevance of Wesley's eighteenth-century theology to recent concerns, especially in the sections "Today and Tomorrow." In the end, what should emerge is a careful articulation of John Wesley's theology that is appreciative of the old and mindful of the new, faithful to the past and attentive to the present. Our sincere hope is that this work may become a suitable means whereby all those traditions that look to John Wesley as a theological mentor may appropriate in new and fresh ways the rich theological legacy that he has left to us all. Through this labor may the people called Methodist, young and old, rich and poor, near and far alike, once again become earnest, empowered, and emboldened in spreading nothing less than "scriptural holiness over the land."⁷³

Chapter One

The God of Holy Love

*Thy darling attribute I praise
Which all alike may prove,
The glory of thy boundless grace,
Thy universal love.*

—Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley. The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 3:560, "Universal Redemption."

In exploring the doctrine of God, we must first of all point out that Wesley often used the term "God" in an ambiguous way.¹ On the one hand, at times he refers in his writings to the entire Godhead, especially when he describes the nature and attributes of the divine being. On the other hand, he sometimes adverts to the language of God the Father, especially when he considers the *work* of the Most High. Accordingly, this distinction between Godhead and God the Father will inform the major sections of this chapter and will help bring increasing clarity to Wesley's *Christian* understanding of the deity.

The Personal and Essential Attributes of God

Wesley's doctrine of God evidences a distinction between the person and work of the Most High, in which the personal and essential attributes of the divine, such as love, holiness, eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, are explored separately from those that emerge from a consideration of the roles in creation and governance, such as goodness, wisdom, and justice. But before these traits are considered, it is important to point out that for Wesley—and here he follows the Anglican *Articles of Religion*—God is spirit without body or parts.² Elsewhere, in his observations on John 2:24, Wesley once again underscores that "God is a Spirit—Not only remote from the body, and all the properties of it, but likewise full of all spiritual perfections."³ In this context, then, not only is the divine simplicity affirmed (without body or parts) but also transcendence, that is, the lack of spatial limitation with respect to God understood precisely as spirit.

Holy Love

When Mildred Bangs Wynkoop published her major work on theology, entitled *A Theology of Love*, she rightly understood that the love of God must be at the heart of this enterprise—if it is to be *Wesleyan*.⁴ Indeed, not only did John Wesley in his own setting point out that "love existed from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love,"⁵ but he also referred to love as God's "darling, his reigning attribute, the attribute that sheds an amiable glory on all his other perfections."⁶ And late in his career Wesley counseled his friend Elizabeth Ritchie in a way that underscored divine love as both the highest human aspiration and glory: "But, blessed be God . . . we know there is nothing deeper, there is nothing better in heaven or earth, than love! There cannot be, unless there were something higher than the God of love!"⁷

Beyond this, Wesley reminded his enlightened detractors throughout the British Isles in his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, produced in 1743, that the Methodist religion was after all about love, "the very thing you want."⁸ The problem, however, then as now, was that so many people misunderstood what is meant by the love of God since they often supplied the content of this "darling attribute" with their *own* ideas, desires, and likings. And once this course is taken, one may be left with a very sentimental and unrealistic view of the divine being in which God emerges as a kindly old grandparent who indulges and tolerates the self-will of the grandchildren to make them "happy." To prevent such a misconception in his own day, Wesley took great pains to link the love of God with another reigning attribute, namely, holiness. "[God] is infinitely distant from every touch of evil," Wesley cautions; "He 'is light, and in him is no darkness at all.'"⁹ Even more pointedly, Wesley appeals to the created order and its majesty—the contemplation of which should suggest something of the beauty, transcendence, and holiness of God. He writes:

The height of the heavens should mind us of God's supremacy, and the infinite distance that is between us and him; the brightness of the heavens, and their purity, should mind us of his majesty, and perfect holiness; the vastness of the heavens, and their encompassing the earth, and influence upon it, should mind us of his immensity and universal providence.¹⁰

For Wesley, then, God is not love in a indulgent way, nor is God holy in an abstract sense; rather, holiness is that divine attribute that informs *every one* of

the divine perfections, but especially love. Put another way, because of its pervasiveness and extent, holiness belongs to "the essential nature of God in a deeper and more profound sense than merely as one attribute among others,"¹¹ as H. Orton Wiley, reflecting on Wesley's work, noted in his own age. As such, holiness is the "moral quality of all God's attributes."¹² It is that distinguishing characteristic peculiar to the Most High alone, and it "sets the Being of God apart from all other forms of being."¹³

What is distinctive about Wesley's contribution here is that he sees the love and holiness of God in relation to—and at times even "in tension with"—each other. That is, on the one hand, Wesley considers "the infinite distance between us and him" in terms of the divine holiness—a holiness that separates and distinguishes. On the other hand, he underscores the communicability and the other-directedness of love, its outreaching embrace. As noted in the Introduction, holiness creates distance; love seeks communion. These same two predicates of the divine being, that is, holiness and love, describe—indeed epitomize— what is the will of the Most High for the church, for those who are not only "called out" and "set apart" from the world in holiness, but also invited to enter that same world in love and mission.

Moreover, if the holiness of God were stressed to the neglect of the divine love, then the Eternal One would remain forever apart from all creatures, and fellowship, much less communion, would hardly be in the offing. For Wesley, then, holiness must ever be understood in terms of the divine love, a love that is energized in a freely chosen outward movement, that stoops down, as it were, and draws the relation, makes contact, and establishes fellowship. This distinct holiness of God, informed by love, and not to be confused with the variety of human loves and desires, is communicated, according to Wesley, by no one less than the Holy Spirit.

This means, of course, that not only is holiness a unique mark of God, indicative of the divine glory and being, but also it is, once again, not a human attribute or possibility at all—*unless it is communicated by grace*. Wesley brings these two movements of holiness and love together throughout his writings, such that one of his preferred ways of attesting to divine grace—the fingerprint of God on the world—is to discourse on the inculcation of *holy love* among the saints. To illustrate, Wesley weaves these two elements together as he comments on Exodus 26:1:

Thus the churches of Christ, though they are *many*, yet are *one*, being *fitly joined together* in holy love and by the *unity of the Spirit*, so growing into one *holy*

temple in the Lord. This tabernacle was very strait and narrow, but at the preaching of the gospel, the church is bid to *enlarge the place of her tent*, and to *stretch forth her curtains*.¹⁴

Elsewhere, as Wesley explores the consequence of knowing a God of holy love, he observes in what manner the offering of a heart should be made to the Almighty: "Other sacrifices from us he would not, but the living sacrifice of the heart hath he chosen. Let it be continually offered up to God through Christ, in flames of holy love."¹⁵ Again, since the mark of "holy love" is so expressive of the divine character, Wesley quite naturally highlights this as he reckons with what is necessary to enter into the richest communion with the Holy One: "God would first, by this inspiration of his Spirit, have wrought in our hearts that *holy love* without which none can enter into glory."¹⁶ In Wesley's doctrine of God, then, in its most basic sense, it is neither love without holiness, nor holiness without love, but both resplendently together.

Eternity

That God is eternal—the One who was, is, and is to come—is a mark that, for Wesley, is intimately associated with the divine *name* of Jehovah, "I am that I am," the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end.¹⁷ That is, God is the One whose very essence is to exist and is, therefore, not dependent on any other being or substance for this qualitatively distinct kind of being. Wesley considers this unique existence of God, a truth by the way he never attempts to prove,¹⁸ by making a distinction between two different kinds of eternities: *a parte ante* (eternity ¹⁹ "It is God alone," Wesley notes, "who ' . . . inhabiteth eternity' in both these senses. The great Creator alone (not any of his creatures) is 'from everlasting to everlasting.' "that is past) and *a parte post* (eternity that is to come).²⁰ Holy love had no beginning; it will have no end.

That only God embraces both senses of eternity just described is a basic truth that does not exclude the notion that angels and human beings may also be eternal, properly understood. To illustrate, Wesley appeals to and uses the distinction between "duration without beginning" and "duration without end" and maintains that while the former does indeed pertain to God alone, the latter characterizes creatures as well. He reasons:

This [duration without end] is not an incommunicable attribute of the great Creator; but he has been graciously pleased to make innumerable multitudes of his creatures partakers of it. He has imparted this not only to angels, and archangels, and all the companies of heaven, . . . but also to the inhabitants of the earth who dwell in houses of clay.²¹

In light of Wesley's reflections, it appears that eternity conceived as "duration without beginning" is especially descriptive of God, a divine-making attribute if you will, since it is a characteristic shared by no other being. In fact, Wesley uses this unique trait as a standard or norm to judge other philosophical questions such as, *Is matter eternal?* "Not indeed *a parte ante*," he reasons, "as some senseless philosophers, both ancient and modern, have dreamed. Not that anything had existed from eternity; seeing if so it must be God."²² In other words, for Wesley, the past eternity of any being or thing, other than the Holy One of Israel, would necessarily result in a plurality of gods and therefore in the elimination of monotheism. Simply put, there cannot be "two Gods, or two Eternals."²³

Omnipresence

As Wesley reflected on the omnipresence of God, another key attribute, he reasoned that just as God is not limited by time, so, too, is the Holy One not limited by space. "As he exists through infinite duration," Wesley notes, "so he cannot but exist through infinite space."²⁴ Unpacking the salient text of Jeremiah 23:24 ("Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD" [KJV]), Wesley again affirms "there is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not."²⁵ That is, since "God is everywhere;"²⁶ the one implies the other.

Though Wesley clearly taught that God is *immanent* in the creation and therefore everywhere, he nevertheless avoided the teaching of pantheism by contending that the Holy One yet *transcends* the universe in some important ways. Accordingly, though Wesley was willing to agree with Isaac Newton (1642–1727) that infinite space is the "sensorium of the Deity,"²⁷ he nevertheless balked at the notion that space circumscribes the being of God or that the universe is the "body" of the Most High. In this context, Wesley aptly holds together both the immanence *and* the transcendence of God, never one affirmation without the other. That is, to stress immanence to the neglect of transcendence would result in pantheism; to stress transcendence to the neglect of immanence would result in separation in which God would be and would remain unknown.

As in many of his theological deliberations, whether in sermons, treatises, or letters, Wesley was not content to leave such an important matter as the omnipresence of God on a speculative, abstract, or merely notional level. Instead, he ever sought to win an insight and to develop practical spiritual and moral applications that would assist others in their walk with a God of holy love. Thus, for example, in his sermon "On the Omnipresence of God," Wesley observes:

Yea, suppose one of your mortal fellow-servants, suppose only a holy man stood by you, would not you be extremely cautious how you conducted yourself, both in word and action? How much more cautious ought you to be when you know that not a holy man, not an angel of God, but God himself, the Holy One "that inhabiteth eternity," is inspecting your heart, your tongue, your hand every moment! And that he himself will surely bring you into judgment for all you

think, and speak, and act under the sun!^{[28](#)}

And in an even more personal and familiar way, Wesley queries: "If you believe that God is about your bed and about your path, and spieth out all your ways, then take care not to do the least thing, not to speak the least word, not to indulge the least thought, which you have reason to think would offend him."^{[29](#)}

Omniscience

For Wesley, many of the essential attributes of God imply one another. To illustrate, he considered the next chief characteristic, namely, the omniscience (literally all-knowing) of God as a "clear and necessary consequence of his omnipresence."³⁰ Put another way, "If he [God] is present in every part of the universe," Wesley reasons, "he cannot but know whatever is, or is done there."³¹ Moreover, in a sermon composed late in his career, "On Divine Providence," Wesley again draws the same relation between omnipresence and omniscience: "The omnipresent God sees and knows all the properties of all the beings that he hath made. He knows all the connections, dependencies, and relations, and all the ways wherein one of them can affect another."³² In short, the infinity (and transcendence) of God in terms of space issues in and supports the idea of divine omniscience. Because God is everywhere, this Eternal One knows all that occurs anywhere.

Wesley's doctrine of the omniscience of God, however, is not only sustained by a consideration of space (omnipresence) but also supported by a consideration of time (eternity). Since "all time, or rather all eternity (for time is only that small fragment of eternity . . .) [is] present to him at once,"³³ then the Lord God knows all things, nothing is beyond such a grasp. On a more philosophical level, and in a way similar to Augustine, Wesley maintains that all time, whether past or future, is present to God as "one eternal now."³⁴ And quite naturally, the same implications apply: the God who perceives all in a moment, in an eternal now, also knows all.

Being the good pastoral leader that he was, Wesley pondered the moral and spiritual consequences of divine omniscience for human life, even referring to what discomfort such knowledge can bring, just as he had done in terms of the attribute of omnipresence, especially when he wrote: "How are ye affected to the omniscience and omnipresence of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol, than an all-seeing God; and therefore do what they can, as Adam did, to 'hide themselves from the presence of the Lord.'"³⁵ These last two attributes, then, highlight not only the truth of divine knowledge but also the importance of human responsibility in the face of God who is holy and glorious.

Omnipotence

And finally, Wesley explores the omnipotence (all powerfulness) of God, the last essential at tribute, in terms of the divine omnipresence itself and contends that "to deny the omnipresence of God implies likewise the denial of his omnipotence. To set bounds to the one is undoubtedly to set bounds to the other also."³⁶ Elsewhere in his writings, Wesley declares that God is "omnipotent as well as omnipresent: there can be no more bounds to his power than to his presence. He 'hath a mighty arm; strong is his hand, and high is his right hand.'"³⁷ But just what does this mean to state that there are no bounds to the power of the Eternal One? How is such a truth to be interpreted properly with respect to both the natural and the spiritual realms?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary at the outset to call to mind the way the eighteenth century viewed the relation between body (matter), on the one hand, and mind (spirit), on the other. Earlier, in the seventeenth century, Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) had used the notion of matter in motion as his basic paradigm to explain all reality. René Descartes (1596–1650), aware of this shift in worldview, sought to appreciate Galileo's latest findings, while at the same time he attempted to preserve the many insights of religion. In other words, Descartes' distinction of body/mind can be interpreted, at least on one level, as an apologetical attempt to maintain the *values* of religion in a world of burgeoning *facts*. If minds and bodies are different things (*res cogitans*, *res extensa*), the Frenchman reasoned, then the findings of one cannot contradict those of the other.

One of the results of this Cartesian division is that matter is deemed utterly inert, lacking self-power. Again, according to Descartes, God created the material world, put a quantity of motion in it, but then quietly withdrew. Although Wesley rejected this last idea of divine withdrawal—which, by the way, basically results in Deism—he, for the most part, followed the French philosopher's earlier premises as they were mediated to him by his own eighteenth century. Reflecting this influence concerning God's omnipotence, Wesley writes:

The name of God is God himself . . . it means, therefore, together with his existence, all his attributes or perfections—his eternity . . . his omnipotence;— . . . who is indeed the only agent in the material world, all matter being essentially

dull and inactive, and moving only as it is moved by the finger of God. And he is the spring of action in every creature, visible and invisible, which could neither act nor exist without the continued influx and agency of his almighty power.³⁸

Wesley's last line just cited—"the continued influx and agency of his almighty power"—is revealing and distinguishes his position with respect to the natural order from that of Descartes in one very important respect. For Wesley at least, the omnipotence of the Creator is conceived in such a manner that the creation is dependent on God's power not only at the very beginning, but also continually so. God is transcendent, to be sure, but the Almighty is also deeply involved with the world. Here, therefore, a wind-it-up-and-watch-it-run Deism is rejected in favor of the continuous and potent activity of God. Moreover, without this sustaining motion of the Supreme Being, the world itself, and all therein, would collapse into sheer nothing. Descartes had placed God in the heavens; Wesley brought the Holy One back to earth.

That Wesley did not retreat from the implications of the omnipotence of God in nature is revealed in a letter drafted to William Law in 1756. In his observations, Wesley is especially critical of certain aspects of *The Spirit of Prayer*, a work that Law had produced earlier. Wesley questions his erstwhile mentor in the following fashion:

Is it not possible for him [God] to change an ox or a stone into a rational philosopher, or a child of Abraham? to change a man or a worm into an angel of heaven? Poor omnipotence which cannot do this! Whether he will or no, is another question. But if he cannot do it, how can he be said to do "whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven, and in earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places?"

Thus does your attachment to a miserable philosophy, lead you to deny the almighty power of God.³⁹

Subsequently, in 1774, Wesley entered into debate with a certain Dr. Hartley who, caught up in the latest scientific developments of the day, claimed that all human sensations were caused, in a deterministic way, by vibrations of the brain. Wesley quite naturally chafed under such determinism, rejected this reductionistic view, and appealed, interestingly enough, to divine omnipotence itself to ensure human freedom. In his "Thoughts Upon Necessity," for example, he declares:

Now, if there be a God, he cannot but have all power over every creature that he has made. He must have equal power over matter and spirits, over our souls and bodies. What are then all the vibrations of the brain to him? or all the natural consequences of them? Suppose there be naturally the strongest concatenation of

vibrations, sensations, reflections, judgments, passions, actions; cannot He, in a moment, whenever and however He pleases, destroy that concatenation? Cannot he cut off, or suspend, in any degree, the connexion between vibrations and sensations, between sensations and reflections, between reflections and judgments, and between judgments and passions or actions? We cannot have any idea of God's omnipotence, without seeing He can do this if he will.⁴⁰

This same "generous" understanding of divine omnipotence is also evident in Wesley's observations on the spiritual realm, especially when he considers the miracle, the supernatural grace, of saving faith, conversion, and the new creation. In a letter to John Smith, for example, he points out:

That "the conversion of sinners to this holiness is no miracle at all," is new doctrine indeed! So new to me, that I never heard it before, either among Protestants or Papists. I think a miracle is a work of omnipotence, wrought by the supernatural power of God. Now, if the conversion of sinners to holiness is not such a work, I cannot tell what is.⁴¹

And elsewhere, in his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Wesley again highlights divine free grace and omnipotence in terms of redemption and in a way that may come as a surprise to some Methodists:

If you ask, "Why then have not all men this faith, all, at least, who conceive it to be so happy a thing? Why do they not believe immediately?"— we answer (on the Scripture hypothesis), "It is the gift of God." No man is able to work it in himself. It is a work of *omnipotence*. It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create a soul anew, but he who at first created the heavens and the earth.⁴²

Though Wesley did indeed have a rich understanding of divine omnipotence, he nevertheless revealed in his writings that God exercises such power in a way that allows for freedom and agency that together categorize all human beings as those who have been created for nothing less than holy love. Put another way, Wesley rejected the notion of omnipotence in the sense that "God exercises all power and thus . . . creatures exercise none,"⁴³ a point that will be developed in greater detail below in terms of God's role as the Governor of all creation.

The Essential Attributes and Predestination

The essential attributes of God, especially omniscience, also help inform Wesley's understanding of predestination and election as distinct actions of the divine being. Expounding upon Romans 8:29-30 ("Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate . . ." [KJV]⁴⁴), Wesley first of all pointed out that this series of actions must not be described as a chain of causes and effects, but simply as "the order in which the several branches of salvation constantly follow each other."⁴⁵ Put another way, this is "the method in which God works."⁴⁶

In this order of salvation detailed by the apostle Paul, Wesley gives great weight to the omniscience of God in that "God *foreknew* those in every nation who would believe."⁴⁷ Such foreknowledge, which constitutes the first step, is not determinative or coercive but investigative: "we must not think they *are* because he *knows* them. No; he knows them because they are."⁴⁸ Actually, Wesley recognized that such a manner of speaking is largely anthropomorphic: "For if we speak properly there is no such thing as either *foreknowledge* or *after-knowledge* in God. All time, or rather all eternity . . . being present to him at once."⁴⁹ In other words, all events are open to the immediacy of divine omniscience.

One of the more important corollaries of the biblical truth that the foreknowledge of God is not determinative is the grace-infused freedom of humanity. Such a freedom not only underscores the integrity of what it means to be a *person* in the sight of a holy God, but also must be carefully understood, lest there be misunderstanding. In Wesley's estimation such freedom, restored by grace after the debilitating effects of original sin, renders men and women both "address-able" and "account-able" with the consequence that they are capable of both reward and punishment. Again, apart from this measure of freedom restored by grace, humanity would be like the sun or the moon, incapable of either virtue or vice.⁵⁰ Moreover, as the next chapter will demonstrate, since this restoring grace goes before salvation, properly speaking, then it is "prevenient" in the best sense of the term. Such grace, however, does not issue in libertarian freedom (the freedom to do otherwise), for all *subsequent* choices as has sometimes been claimed in the name of Wesley, but only for present realities suggesting ongoing dependence. That is, prevenient grace in this initial context puts in place a more limited freedom of response-ability, that is, a freedom to receive the further

grace of God (deeper levels of prevenient grace) by which one can then indeed do otherwise. In other words, the emphasis here as elsewhere is not on humanity and its "capacities" (which can quickly lead to moralism), but on the efficacious grace of God; not on human powers, but on the divine benefit that can be received by persons as they become increasingly open to grace upon grace.

The second step in this Pauline order is that those whom God foreknew, the Holy One did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Wesley interprets this biblical truth not in a deterministic way, running roughshod over human freedom restored in some measure by grace, but in a way that is consonant with the understanding that "God decrees from everlasting to everlasting that all who believe in the Son of his love shall be conformed to his image."⁵¹ Put another way, the omniscience and foreknowledge of God, once again, inform predestination, giving it a proper sense. Therefore, the "unchangeable, irreversible, irresistible decree of God"⁵² is not that the Most High will give saving grace only to the elect and withhold it from the reprobate, but none other than "he that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."⁵³ Election, then, is not unconditional but conditional; it requires having faith in Jesus Christ.

Calling those whom God did predestinate as well as justifying those who have been so called are the third and fourth steps. But Wesley makes it clear in this context that the term "justification" is used more broadly than elsewhere in the apostle Paul's writings, and as a consequence it embraces not simply the forensic theme of forgiveness but also the *different* work of regeneration, of making holy, which is ever associated with it. In other words, the term "justification" is employed in a peculiar sense in this setting, whereby it means "he made them just or righteous . . . or (as we usually speak) 'sanctified them.'"⁵⁴ However, Wesley does not contend that the apostle conflated the matters of justification and initial sanctification, such that the latter became or could become the basis of the former. On the contrary, the single term "justification," in this somewhat abbreviated order of salvation, is simply a shorthand form, a summary and general term, for the two *distinct* works of justification and regeneration, a usage that is not often duplicated elsewhere. At any rate, the last step in this order is "whom he justified, those he glorified."⁵⁵ In other words, "having made them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints,' "⁵⁶ God gives them "the kingdom which was prepared for them before the world began."⁵⁷

Naturally, some Calvinists even in Wesley's own day tried to soften their teaching on predestination by claiming that God only chose the elect and did not actively reprobate the damned. Wesley, however, always considered this line of argument evasive and replied that "election cannot stand without reprobation."⁵⁸ That is, "whom God passes by, those he reprobates. It is one and the same thing."⁵⁹ Several Calvinists responded to this criticism, taking the argument further, by observing that the Almighty, in their estimation, rightly passes over some sinners (the reprobate) and allows them, therefore, to become examples of divine justice. Wesley, nevertheless, rejected this defense as well by pointing out that he could find "no such teaching in the word of God."⁶⁰

The key difference, then, between Wesley, the Arminian, and a Calvinist such as Augustus Toplady, author of the hymn "Rock of Ages," was that the former repeatedly maintained that election was not unconditional but conditional as noted earlier. That is, those and only those who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved. Toplady, for his part, could see little difference between a conditional election, in which some measure of human involvement was required, however small, and salvation by works. In time Wesley became so frustrated with Toplady's views, especially when the latter accused him of teaching salvation by works, that he crudely summarized the Calvinist leader's teaching in the following maxim: "The sum of all is this: One in twenty, suppose, of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will: The reprobate shall be damned, do what they can."⁶¹ Why is it then, according to Wesley, that some are lost? It is because of neither divine foreknowledge nor any unconditional decree of God nor even the failure of a divine inscrutable will to give sinners what graces they need. Rather, some sinners will be lost simply because, as Wesley puts it, "*they will not be saved.*"⁶² In other words, they stubbornly refuse what grace is offered. They will not come to the Savior so that they may have life.⁶³

Wesley's ongoing debate with the Calvinists that went through an early phase with the publication of the sermon "Free Grace" in 1739 and a very contentious later phase during the 1770s was viewed by Wesley himself as unfortunate though necessary. What was at stake in Wesley's reckoning of the matter, accurate or not, was nothing less than the integrity of the gospel, the reality of holy love, and the character of God. Indeed, Wesley believed that the doctrine of predestination, as held by some of his contemporaries, "directly tends to destroy that *holiness* which is the end of all the ordinances of God."⁶⁴ Again, this

teaching not only [65](#) but also "cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like."[66](#)

In a similar fashion, the doctrine of predestination, if not properly understood, can easily undermine the love of God and humanity. For one thing, it strikes at the love of God in the sense that it makes the glorious One the agent of *all* that happens, both good and evil. Implicating God in sin, the Westminster Assembly of Divines, as Wesley understood them, contended that "whatever happens in time, was unchangeably determined from all eternity."[67](#) And Susanna Wesley herself cautioned her son early on against such a deterministic philosophy that was superimposed upon the sacred Scriptures:

The doctrine of predestination, as maintained by the rigid Calvinists, is very shocking, and ought utterly to be abhorred; because it directly charges the most h[oly] God with being the author of sin. And I think you reason very well and justly against it. For 'tis certainly inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to lay any man under either a physical or moral necessity of committing sin, and then punish him for doing it.[68](#)

Wesley evidently agreed with Susanna's trenchant remarks, for in his sermon "Free Grace," he refers to the doctrine of predestination, as held by some of the Calvinists, as blasphemy in that "it represents the most Holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust."[69](#) Again, how is God good or loving to the reprobate, especially when the Holy One refuses to give her or him precisely those graces she or he needs in order to be saved?[70](#) "Is not this such love," Wesley asks, "as makes your blood run cold?"[71](#) And in terms of Christ, Wesley observes:

This doctrine represents our blessed Lord—"Jesus Christ the righteous"— . . . as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity. For it cannot be denied that he everywhere speaks as if he was willing that all men should be saved. Therefore, to say he was not willing that all men should be saved is to represent him as a mere hypocrite and dissembler.[72](#)

A more careful and sensitive examination of Scripture reveals that out of tender mercy and with the graciousness of love that expresses the divine nature, God desires that all will come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). As a God of holy love, God can neither will otherwise nor go against the divine character, though that goodwill can unfortunately be spurned by human beings who have freedom

enough to resist what grace is genuinely offered.

The Work of God/Father

For Wesley, the work of God, in terms of creation, preservation, and governance, is intimately connected with the divine attributes just discussed. Indeed, it was out of love, overflowing and rich, that the world was created. And it was out of this same effulgent love that humanity was brought forth to be in relationship with the One whose eyes are too pure to behold evil. Considering the origins of faith and love, Wesley elaborates:

There was therefore no place before the foundation of the world for faith either in the general or particular sense. But there was for love. Love existed from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious Creator to exist, and to love.⁷³

Beyond this, not only did Wesley consider love to be the source and very reason for creation, but also he demonstrated that love was not subsequent to the creation of humanity, needing time to come into being as a process or development, but it was there at the outset. Wesley states:

And as light and heat were not subsequent to the creation of the sun, but began to exist with it, so that the moment it existed it shone; so spiritual light and heat, knowledge and love, were not subsequent to the creation of man, but they began to exist together with him. The moment he existed, he knew and loved.⁷⁴

In light of this, the following sections, which display the work of God as Creator and Governor, will intimate how such work must also be understood in terms of the divine being and character.

Creator

In terms of creation, sometimes Wesley simply referred to the work of the Godhead; nevertheless, at other times he underscored the role of the Father in particular. Thus in his *Notes on Matthew 6:9* (the opening lines of the Lord's Prayer), Wesley points to the Father as the One who is "good and gracious to all, our Creator, our Preserver, the Father of our Lord, and of us in him . . . the Father of the universe, of angels and men."⁷⁵ The unbegotten One, however, creates not as a monad, apart from relationship, but *through* the Son by proclaiming the Word. So understood, the Logos, according to Wesley, is "the Word whom the Father begat or *spoke* from eternity; by whom the Father *speaking*, maketh all things."⁷⁶ So then the power of the spoken Word is manifest in the created order itself; creation is nothing less than an oral act, and it brings all things into existence. Again, the evocative power of the Word brings forth life and being in abundance. It is this same power, interestingly enough, clothed in the promises of the gospel, that will also lead to redemption.

In a way similar to many of his eighteenth-century colleagues, Wesley affirmed that God created *ex nihilo*, that is, out of nothing. The Lord God "called out of nothing by his all-powerful word the whole universe, all that is."⁷⁷ Wesley understood that the idea of eternity was an essential characteristic of the divine, such that to deny that God created out of nothing was likewise to affirm not only that something *other* than God always was but also that it was independent, not contingent, upon anything for its existence. In Wesley's reckoning, such notions are clearly impossible simply because, as noted earlier, there cannot be "two eternals." For the English leader, the characteristic of eternity (especially in the sense of *a parte ante*) is a divine-making one. Nothing other than the Lord God, therefore, can have such a mark or trait. And that God creates at all, bringing out of nothing what once was not, is a clear demonstration of the divine goodness and wisdom. Simply put, work bespeaks of being.

Wesley not only affirmed God as Creator but also took personal comfort in believing that what exists did not come about simply by chance or by an "inexorable necessity,"⁷⁸ but that the Almighty is purposive, the "intelligent Cause and Lord of all."⁷⁹ Put another way, the Most High is "the producer of every man, every animal, every vegetable in the world; as he is the true *primum mobile*, the spring of all motion throughout the ⁸⁰ And this orderly, purposive

creation is of two sorts: the invisible and the visible. Wesley explains: universe." By sight we take knowledge of the visible world, from the surface of the earth to the region of the fixed stars. But what is the world visible to us but "a speck of creation," compared to the whole universe? To the invisible world, that part of the creation which we cannot see at all by reason of its distance, in the place of which, through the imperfection of our senses, we are presented with an universal blank.⁸¹

In this context, Wesley apparently has in mind the physical universe that, due to its size and distance, is incapable of being perceived in its entirety by human senses. But he also employed the term "invisible creation" in yet another way—to highlight the truth that not all created beings have a physical body. Here, Wesley, of course, was thinking of the angels, that class of beings who are intelligent spirits and who serve both the Creator and humanity alike. "They are all spirits: not material . . . beings; not clogged with flesh and blood like us," Wesley remarks, "but having bodies, *if any*, not gross and earthly like ours, but of a finer substance, resembling fire or flame."⁸² And the service to humanity of such angelic beings includes, among other things, removing doubts and difficulties, casting light on what was earlier dark and obscure, confirming the truth that is after godliness, warning of evil in disguise, and placing what is both noble and good in a clear, strong light.⁸³ "Thus do they secretly minister in numberless instances to the heirs of salvation," Wesley observes; "while we hear only the voices of men, and see none but men round about us."⁸⁴

The creation of angels who are endued with understanding, affections, and liberty⁸⁵ once again displays the goodness of the Creator, while at the same time it suggests a certain order, what Wesley referred to on occasion as a chain of being. There is "one chain of beings," he asserts, "from the lowest to the highest point, from an unorganized particle of earth or water to Michael the archangel."⁸⁶ Again, borrowing terminology from Plato and the later Cambridge Platonists, Wesley contended there was "a golden chain . . . 'let down from the throne of God'—an exactly connected series of beings, from the highest to the lowest."⁸⁷ Such a progression fulfills the many and different designs of the Creator. "The work of creation not only proceeded gradually from one thing to another," Wesley affirms, "but advanced from that which was less excellent, to that which was more so."⁸⁸ Reflecting on the manner of this progressive order, this slow advance of increasing complexity and excellence, especially as it offers a clue to the divine being, Wesley observes in his notes on Genesis:

So that in *six days* God made the world. We are not to think but that God could have made the world in an instant: but he did it in six days, that he might shew himself a free agent, doing his own work, both in his own way, and in his own time; that his wisdom, power and goodness, might appear to us, and be meditated upon by us, the more distinctly.⁸⁹

This gradual, slow ascent of creation is not to be understood in a rigid, hierarchical way, especially if it is to the detriment of the animal realm. Indeed, Wesley's high estimate of animals, as creatures who have come from the hand of the living God, is evident in his comment that "the Father of all has a tender regard for even his lowest creatures."⁹⁰ Nevertheless, such regard does not mean a basic equality, in every respect, exists among the species. Wesley explains: [Y]et I dare not affirm that he [God] has an *equal regard* for them and for the children of men. I do not believe that

He sees *with equal eyes*, as Lord of all,
A hero perish or a sparrow fall!

By no means. This is exceeding pretty; but it is absolutely false. For though

Mercy, with truth and endless grace,
O'er all his works doth reign,
Yet chiefly he delights to bless
His favourite creature, man.⁹¹

Concerning the time of creation, there are several places in Wesley's writings in which he reckons that the world is merely six thousand years old. Thus, for example, in his sermon "On the Fall of Man," as he considers the consequences of the fall for the entirety of human history, Wesley states: "Who has been able in the course of near six thousand years to evade the execution of this sentence passed on Adam and all his posterity?"⁹² Elsewhere, in another piece, Wesley takes into account the amount of experience that evil angels have acquired since the beginning of time and opines: "How great is their subtlety! Matured by the experience of above six thousand years."⁹³ In many respects a man of his age, Wesley was likely dependent on the reckoning of James Ussher (1581–1656), the Archbishop of Armagh, who in his *Annals of the Old and New Testament* fixed creation as having occurred in 4004 B.C. Wesley, no doubt, would have altered his views in light of subsequent evidence. Part of the problem here is that Wesley, in his eighteenth-century setting, failed to understand just how large the

universe actually was, where distance readily translates into time. But even Sir William Herschel (1738–1822), noted German astronomer who moved to England as a young man, in his work *On the Construction of the Heavens*, underestimated the size of the Milky Way galaxy (which many believed to be the entire universe) by three orders of magnitude.

Moreover, just as the Lord God has created all things, so, too, does the Holy One sustain them as well. "He is the preserver as well as the creator of everything that exists," Wesley notes; " 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power,' that is, by his powerful word."⁹⁴ So understood, preserving and sustaining what has been made is an ongoing activity of nurture marked by both *goodness* and *wisdom*. Wesley elaborates: " 'Our Father'—our Preserver . . . day by day sustains the life he has given; of whose continuing love we now and every moment receive life and breath and all things."⁹⁵ God is good in that all creatures are preserved "in that degree of well-being which is suitable to their several natures."⁹⁶ God is wise in that all creatures are cared for in terms of "their several relations, connections, and dependences, so as to compose one system of beings, to form one entire universe."⁹⁷

Sovereign

Wesley taught that God's role as Creator must be distinguished from the role as Governor because the attributes that correspond to each work must not be intermixed or confused. As Creator, the Almighty is sovereign and free. As Governor, the Most High must act without "impeaching . . . inviolable justice."⁹⁸ Again, as Creator, God brought forth all things according to the divine, sovereign will. No one or thing constrained such choices and judgments. Clearly, "justice has not, cannot have, any place here," Wesley maintains; "for nothing is due to what has no being."⁹⁹ In this context, then, sovereignty is understood principally as the freedom of God in terms of creation and nature. However, sovereignty can also be conceived in a second, soteriological sense as divine liberty in terms of redemption, a vital topic that will be explored in greater detail in a subsequent chapter. For now, however, what is in view is simply divine sovereignty with respect to creation; and Wesley outlined such liberty in his "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty" in the following way: God began creation at what time seemed good; determined the duration of the universe; appointed the place of the universe in the immensity of space; fixed the number of stars as well as the components of the cosmos; created the earth with its creatures; made human beings as embodied spirits with understanding liberty, and will; set the times for every nation to come into being; allotted the time, the place and the circumstances for the birth of each individual; gave to each a body, whether weak or strong; and finally provided humanity various degrees of understanding and knowledge.¹⁰⁰

The liberty accorded to human beings, who have been created for relationship with a holy God, means that Wesley could not affirm, nor take divine sovereignty to such an extent, that he would maintain, as did the Westminster Confession, "God from eternity ordained whatsoever should come to pass."¹⁰¹ As noted earlier, the freedom and sovereignty with respect to creation must not, once again, be confused with what pertains to redemption. A distinction, in other words, must be made, to use more technical language, between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*, the absolute freedom and power of God in terms of creation, and the ordered and, in some sense, restricted freedom and power that makes room for the human beings (reflective of the divine image) that God has actually created.

Governor

In several places in his writings, Wesley refers to the work of God/Father as that of both Creator and Governor. The first role, as we have just seen, underscores the divine freedom and sovereignty to create all things in accordance with God's good pleasure. The second role as Governor, however, highlights neither freedom nor sovereignty, but justice and mercy. "Whenever, therefore, God acts as a Governor, as a rewarder, or punisher," Wesley states, "he no longer acts as a mere Sovereign, by his own sole will and pleasure; but as an impartial Judge, guided in all things by invariable justice."¹⁰² As Governor, God will invariably act in accordance with the holiness that expresses the divine nature itself. And it was in that same holiness that humanity was created as free, responsible moral beings. To bring the divine freedom into the role of Governor as it informs that of Creator would issue in injustice, inconsistency, as well as in the failure to render to each his or her due in accordance with God's being, character, and purpose. In short, holy love would not be fully appreciated, nor would evil be rightly recognized.

The Moral Law

One way, however, in which Wesley did relate the roles of Creator and Governor was in terms of the moral law, that "incorruptible picture of the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity."¹⁰³ As Creator, not only did God bring forth a physical world, but also, in fashioning humanity, the Almighty brought into being a *moral* and *spiritual* order in accordance with the moral law, which "is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature."¹⁰⁴ In other words, God freely chose to create a world that would evidence the personal attributes of the divine being in terms of holiness and love. The moral law, which is holy, just, and good, is therefore imbedded in the very nature of the *created* moral and spiritual order. Wesley explains: "If we survey the law of God in another point of view, it is supreme, unchangeable reason; it is unalterable rectitude; it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created."¹⁰⁵ Again, Wesley points out that the moral law, the immutable rule of right and wrong, is an expression of "the nature and fitnesses of things, and on their essential relations to each other,"¹⁰⁶ so evident in a created order. Moreover, this moral realm or dimension is capable of being discerned by those beings created in the image and likeness of God.

The ancient Greeks (see Plato's Dialogue *Euthyphro*) had pondered the same question that Wesley took up in his own day, namely: "Is a thing therefore right because God wills it? Or does he will it because it is right?"¹⁰⁷ In a certain sense, Wesley thought this statement to be misleading since the two questions that comprise it appear to suggest a polarity, a distinction between God and the will of God. "It seems, then, that the whole difficulty arises from considering God's will as distinct from God," Wesley exclaims; "Otherwise it vanishes away."¹⁰⁸ In other words, not only is God the cause of the moral law, but also this same law is an apt expression of the will of God, a will that must be identified with, and not separated from, the divine being. This means then that the moral law, the holy law of love, as an expression of the will of God, is unshakeable and enduring. Since this law is a copy of the eternal mind and has been mediated through the things that have been made, especially in terms of the fitness of relations established therein, then the contemplation of this law gives a clue to the constancy of the divine nature, in terms of personal and essential characteristics, as well as to the content of justice and mercy, elements that are always informed

and illuminated by the will of God. With such views in place, Wesley was in harmony with many theologians of his day in his insistence on "the inexorability of the moral law and on the unchangeableness of God's nature."¹⁰⁹

Providential Provider

As the Governor of the world, the Lord God manages the affairs of creation. When this sustaining care is understood especially in terms of creatures, rather than in terms of inanimate *objects* (such as the sun or the moon), Wesley employed the word "providence" to explain the full range of his meaning. Accordingly, Wesley declared that such care is not the wishful thinking of Christians but is a teaching clearly affirmed in the Scriptures.¹¹⁰ Moreover, he drew on occasion a relationship between some of the attributes already discussed and God's care for the world. "The omnipresent God sees and knows all the properties of all the beings that he hath made," Wesley observes, "and all the ways wherein one of them can affect another."¹¹¹ Beyond this, God knows "how the stars, comets, or planets above influence the inhabitants of the earth beneath . . . He knows all the animals of the lower world, whether beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, or insects . . . [and] He knows all the hearts of the sons of men, and understands all their thoughts."¹¹²

Even some of Wesley's theological detractors, however, were willing to admit that God is concerned in a general way with the creation and is therefore good, but they were loathe to admit the notion of a particular providence, that the Supreme Being, the Maker of all, would dare to be troubled as a Governor with the small, private, and commonplace troubles of individuals and societies. Indeed, several leading thinkers during the eighteenth century—John Hawkesworth among them—argued only for a *general* providence rather than a particular one. Supported by their reading of such Deist classics as John Toland's *Christianity Not Mystrious* (1696) and Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation* (1730), many cultural leaders put forth the view that God created the world to run according to basic laws and principles, the appeal to which often resulted in the rejection of any notion of a particular providence, that is, that God expresses providential care and concern toward *individuals* in the details of their lives.

Wesley reflected upon such a judgment during the latter part of his career when he had already witnessed numerous instances of a particular care in his own life during the great evangelical revival, having been attacked by mobs on more than one occasion. In his sermon "On Divine Providence," produced in 1786, Wesley points out, first of all, that the denial of a particular providence,

the assumption that "the little affairs of men are far beneath the regard of the great Creator and Governor,"¹¹³ contradicts the Scriptures. Second, such a view apparently makes no allowance for exceptions to the general laws of nature in the form of miracles by repudiating divine freedom and agency.¹¹⁴ To be sure, in establishing such general laws, Wesley counters that God "never precluded himself from making exceptions to them whensoever he pleases, either by suspending that law in favour of those that love him, or by employing his mighty angels."¹¹⁵ And third, Wesley maintains that the idea of a general providence exclusive of a particular one is a confused and an ultimately contradictory idea. He reasons:

You say, "You allow a *general* providence, but deny a *particular* one." And what is a general (of whatever kind it be) that includes no particulars? Is not every general necessarily made up of its several particulars? Can you instance in any general that is not? . . .

What becomes then of your general providence, exclusive of a particular? Let it be for ever rejected by all rational men as absurd, self-contradictory nonsense.¹¹⁶

Having read Thomas Crane's *A Prospect of Divine Providence*,¹¹⁷ Wesley viewed the particular providence of God in a threefold circle of increasing intensity and care. Thus, the outer circle includes all of humanity, which is composed of "not only the Christian world . . . but the Mahometans . . . and the heathens likewise."¹¹⁸ The second, smaller circle, contains all who are Christians, all who are called such, and all who "profess to believe in Christ."¹¹⁹ And finally, the third circle, the innermost one, embraces only real Christians, those "that worship God, not in form only, but in spirit and in truth."¹²⁰ Providential care, then, is graded in accordance with a deepening of faith and trust in Christ.

Many spiritual and even a few psychological benefits result from knowing the providential care, indeed the affection and grace, of a loving God. Strengthened by a fund of assurance, the children of God can weather their misfortunes and setbacks, knowing that a holy and powerful Governor cares for them deeply. Despite misfortunes, the world is not a chaotic place of disorder and happenstance, nor will God's gracious will to bless be ultimately frustrated in the lives of those who love the Most High as the center of their being. "What is there either in heaven or in earth that can harm you while you are under the care of the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth?" Wesley exclaims. And again, "Let

all earth and all hell combine against you—yea, the whole animate and inanimate creation—they cannot harm while God is on your side: his favourable kindness covers you 'as a shield!' "[121](#)

Summary of the Attributes

The Two Principal Conjunctions in Wesley's Theology:

- (1) Holiness (Holy Love) and Grace
- (2) Law and Grace

In understanding the Almighty to be a God of holy love, whereas neither holiness nor love is conceived apart from the other, Wesley quite naturally brought this tension or conjunction into much of his writing about the divine being. In other words, this is his most basic theological orientation, and many of the other conjunctions of his practical theology (such as law *and* grace, faith *and* holy living, for example) must be seen as faithful reflections of the preeminent, and in some sense normative, divine character and being. Indeed, it is nothing less than holy love that informs Wesley's understanding of the Godhead in terms of the distinction between transcendence (separation) and immanence (communion). And it is this same tension that illuminates the roles of God/Father as both Governor (in accordance with justice and the holy moral law) and Creator (in terms of goodness, wisdom, and grace). So understood, even the vital conjunction of law and grace, which will play out in Wesley's doctrine of salvation, must be conceived as caught up in an even larger conjunction that is an important window on the divine being and purpose. Therefore, attentiveness to this basic theological orientation of holy love and grace as was carefully developed in Wesley's practical theology will provide a suitable vantage point to view not only the divine beauty and goodness, but also the wonder and possibility of those beings who have been created in such love, grace, and holiness. And finally, this same orientation keeps Wesley's theology free from the shoals of needless philosophical abstraction and speculation, for it is none other than the Holy One, that is, a God of holy love, who is wise, good, just, eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent.

Today and Tomorrow: Recent Trends in Cosmology

Wesley had a keen interest in the physical sciences, especially in the findings of astronomy, as revealed in his publication *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: Or a Compendium of Natural Philosophy*. Informed by the work of Ray, Derham, Nieuentyt, and Mather,¹²² Wesley appropriated the text of Johann Franz Buddeus (1667–1729), which was translated from its original Latin. Having held professorships at such places as Coburg, Halle, and Jena, Buddeus was a gifted German Lutheran divine known for his striking and rich style. Wesley did not, however, slavishly appropriate the work of this German scholar, and he "found occasion to retrench, enlarge, or alter every chapter, and almost every section,"¹²³ thereby, in a real sense, making *A Survey* a work very much his own. Wesley's overarching purpose in this publication was to glorify God, the Creator. It was not, in other words, penned to "entertain an idle, barren curiosity; but to display the invisible things of God, his power, wisdom, and goodness."¹²⁴

In rightly dividing truth, Wesley makes an important distinction in *A Survey* between the proper interpretation of scripture and the findings of science. For example, as he considers the apparent discrepancy that some biblical passages contradict what is known of the earth's motion, Wesley points out that "the scriptures were never intended to instruct us in philosophy, or astronomy; and therefore, on those subjects, expressions are not always to be taken in the literal sense."¹²⁵ With such views in place, Wesley no doubt felt free to use the confirmed findings of the science of his age as he reflected upon the wonder and glory of the things that have been made.

Wesley most likely approached this field of natural philosophy (what today we call science) with excitement, perhaps even with a sense of childlike wonder. This was the time of Isaac Newton (1642–1727), who was elected president of the Royal Society in 1703. Earlier, in 1687, Newton had published his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy), which helped revolutionize the physics of the period. Building upon the work of Galileo, Newton essentially rewrote the science of moving bodies and understood for the first time that what keeps the planets in their orbits is the very same force (gravity) that operates on the earth. This was

also the time of Edmund Halley, who applied some of the insights of Newton, especially his three laws of motion, and correctly predicted in 1705 that the comet that had appeared in 1682 (eventually named after him) would complete its cycle of seventy-six years and, therefore, return in 1758, though Halley himself did not live to see it. Moreover, William Herschel, who had been appointed a royal astronomer by King George III, determined that the motion of the sun is directed toward the constellation Hercules; he published a list of double stars; and in 1781, he discovered the planet Uranus. Wesley likely read Herschel's *On the Construction of the Heavens* that considered the shape of the Milky Way galaxy. Beyond this, William Derham published his *Astro-theology* in 1714, while Wesley was at Charterhouse, a work that moved from the field of astronomy to the contemplation of God, a method that Wesley appreciated most of all.

Among other things, the careful editing of *A Survey* reveals that Wesley had kept up with this latest scientific knowledge. Indeed, one way in which Wesley was progressive, though some of his co-religionists were not, was in terms of his growing estimate of the size of the universe itself (though still small by current standards), and in his speculation that this vast expanse suggests the possibility of other worlds beyond the earth. He reasons:

It now appears a more probable and rational conjecture, that our solar system is but one of innumerable systems; that the universe is of infinite extension, and occupied by an infinite multitude of worlds; that the sovereignty of the Creator is not limited to a comparatively insignificant and solitary world, or system, but that it is infinite as his wisdom, and extensive as his power.¹²⁶

Moreover, Wesley maintains in this same work that the Holy One is Lord of the universe and "not merely of this little, straggling world of ¹²⁷ Indeed, Wesley fully accepted the findings of Copernicus who, in his *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, argued that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the solar system.¹²⁸ He had not linked, in other words, a particular view on these matters (that of Aristotle and Ptolemy, for instance) with the integrity and truthfulness of the Christian faith as the Italian inquisition had already done.¹²⁹ Wesley's vision of the cosmos was great; his view of the Christian faith and its Author, even greater.

Though the intellectually curious Wesley was well aware of the first great cosmological revolution in affirming the theory of Copernicus (as well as the earlier work of Galileo), two more were beyond his reach since they did not occur until the twentieth century. In 1924, for example, Edwin Hubble, a lawyer

turned astronomer, discovered other galaxies beyond the Milky Way. Indeed, some of what William Herschel had considered in Wesley's own day simply to be nebulae actually turned out to be entire galaxies. Five years later, in 1929, while working at the Mount Wilson Observatory, Hubble came to an even more stunning conclusion: the universe was not static, as even Einstein had once thought, but was actually expanding. Hubble's painstaking measurements indicated that the light from distant galaxies was redshifted, which meant that they were moving away from the earth, the point of observation. What's more, the farther away the galaxies were, the faster they were moving. And *all* the galaxies were moving away.

Building on the work of Hubble, astronomers realized that if the universe was actually expanding over time, and if the clock were run backwards, so to speak, then the earlier universe had to be much smaller in size and far more dense. Already in the 1920s, Alexander Friedman and Abbe Georges Lemaitre put forth what was later called the big bang theory of the universe that was improved upon during the 1940s by George Gamow to reach its modern formulation. The expansion of the universe from a point of singularity (taking the clock all the way back) blew away "the idea of a cozy little universe."¹³⁰ Indeed, not only did the universe have a precise beginning, where fractions of a second (the instantaneous) made crucial, lasting differences, but also it proved to be a challenge to comprehend just what caused the expansion of the universe in the first place.¹³¹ Simply put, why did space/time begin at all?

Scientists are not yet clear what took place before the smallest measurement of time, that is, Planck time, or an interval before 10^{-43} seconds. Here the classical physics that has helped scientists understand the large-scale universe of stars and galaxies (Einstein's general theory of relativity, for example) is not able to explain this very tiny world, close to a singularity, in which quantum mechanics as a theory holds sway. Though three of the four major physical forces of electromagnetism, the weak force (that underlies some forms of radioactivity and interactions between subatomic particles) and the strong force (that holds elementary particles such as quarks together) have been brought under the theory of quantum mechanics, gravity remains an outsider and something of a puzzle. However, until all of these forces can be explained in terms of quantum realities, in a unified theory, the precise beginning of the universe will remain a mystery. This has not stopped Stephen Hawking, however — well-known professor of mathematics at Cambridge University — from pointing out that many of the elements of the early universe appear to have been

precisely set, such as its rate of expansion, to allow for the rise of the universe in the first place. He states:

If the rate of expansion one second after the big bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have recollapsed before it ever reached its present size. On the other hand, if the expansion rate at one second had been larger by the same amount, the universe would have expanded so much that it would be effectively empty now.¹³²

In light of this observation, Hawking speculates, "If the universe is expanding, there may be physical reasons why there had to be a beginning. One could still believe that God created the universe at the instant of the big bang."¹³³

The next major revolution in physics and cosmology, of which Wesley was not aware, has to do with the rate of the expansion of the universe (this factor is known as the Hubble constant) and its implications along so many lines of thought. Until fairly recently, scientists thought that the rate of increase of the size of the universe was slowing down due to the braking effect of gravity. In 1998, however, as some astronomers were studying supernova explosions, they realized that the expansion of the universe was actually speeding up. With the Hubble constant now fixed at 1, the universe is "flat" and should expand forever. Scientists surmise that a force known as "dark energy" is causing this acceleration. The fate of the universe, therefore, is neither a big crunch (the reversal of the big bang) nor a fiery consumption. Rather the *increasingly* expanding universe will grow old, settle into a much cooler state, and eventually die.

In light of these three revolutions, modern scientists and cosmologists have put forth a couple of basic models to explain the origin of the universe. The first comes from Stephen Hawking, who, in a departure from the big bang model, speculates that there may be no point of singularity, no beginning of time/space at all. Rather the space/time dimensions of the universe are finite but without an edge, much like a globe is limited in size, though it has no beginning or ending point. Hawking explains:

It is possible for space-time to be finite in extent and yet to have no singularities that formed a boundary or edge. Space-time would be like the surface of the earth, only with two more dimensions. The surface of the earth is finite in extent but it doesn't have a boundary or edge.¹³⁴

In this model, there is no moment of creation and little for a Creator to do since the universe is self-contained. As some of the ancient Greeks had already argued centuries ago, the universe, quite simply, always was. Other scientists, however,

are not so convinced. For in order for Hawking's model to work, he must appeal to the notion of imaginary time.

A second model, dependent on many of the insights of the big bang theory, speculates that the universe arose either out of a quantum fluctuation or out of a black hole from another universe. The Heisenberg principle of uncertainty, which governs quantum fluctuations, indicates that empty space is alive with packets of energy that appear and then disappear "within the time limit set by quantum rules."¹³⁵ For some reason not yet fully understood, a packet of energy took off, was rapidly inflated, and became our present universe. And in terms of the other possibility, "Every black hole in our Universe may be the gateway to another universe," John Gribbin writes, "and our Universe may have been formed by the collapse of a black hole in another universe, making an infinite sea of bubble universes in the vastness of space and time."¹³⁶ Such an understanding has led Fred Adams and others to speak not of a "universe" but of the "multiverse" in which any number of universes can exist like so many bubbles on a lake. Adams explains:

But if the laws of physics can enforce the production of our universe, these same laws could create a whole series of universes through the same mechanism. These other universes, the offspring of other small patches of space-time being launched into existence, would evolve and never come into contact with our own.¹³⁷

In terms of this recent science, just when we think we have come to at least some appreciation of the dizzying size of the universe—moving from solar system to galaxy, to local groups of galaxies, to clusters, to clouds, to superclusters and on to supercluster complexes or walls—the framework changes. Is the multiverse, with its image of a universe as but one bubble on a lake, the final frame of reference, or is that lake simply a part of an even larger structure?

If Wesley were alive today, what would he make of these most recent models, given his interest in the field? Since he was a theist, an Anglican priest who affirmed that the world comes into being out of the *Word* of the Creator, Wesley obviously could not accept one line of Hawking's speculation that the universe (time/space) lacks a point of singularity and therefore has neither a beginning nor need of a Creator. But it is by no means a stretch to contend that Wesley's thought, especially as reflected in *A Survey*, could indeed embrace not only the big bang theory but also some of its most recent expressions in terms of quantum fluctuations or black holes. That is, such developments could be viewed as the

way, the very processes, through which the Creator has brought all things into existence. And if the universe is that much greater, more wonderful, than we have hitherto imagined, then so, too, is the One who has created it—elements congenial to Wesley's own thinking.

What Wesley's thought cannot embrace, however, given his presuppositions and assumptions, is any sort of naturalistic explanation that would remove the reality of God from consideration. For behind the quarks, leptons, gluons, photons, and bosons, there is the Creator, the Spirit of God, and the Word of God who, out of holy love, brought forth all things into existence to communicate, through the things that have been made, nothing less than the beauty and wonder of the divine life.

Chapter Two

Humanity: Created in Holy Love, Fallen in Nature

*Shut up in unbelief I groan,
And blindly serve a God unknown
Till thou the veil remove;
The gift unspeakable impart,
And write thy name upon my heart,
And manifest thy love.*

—*Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, The Works of John Wesley. A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), Hymn #114, 7:225.*

The goodness and wisdom of God have been manifested in the things that have been made, from the shining sun to the growing plant, from the raging comet to the soft crying of a baby. This same created order, for Wesley, demonstrates not only divine freedom but also sovereign action. That is, when the Most High creates human beings in the divine image itself, the Eternal One does not get the permission from persons before they are brought into being, simply because the sovereign action of creation itself is required before the very rudiments of relations and accountability can even emerge. As in so many other places in Wesley's theology, divine action—the gracious, free, even lavish, working of God *alone*—is the prerequisite for all responsibility. Simply put, behind the divine/human relation is the sheer, utter gift of coming into being itself.

Humanity Created as Complex Beings

As Wesley considered the creation of human beings, in some sense the apex of the divine labors, he underscored the complexity, not the simplicity, of their existence. First of all, men and women are rooted in a created order as contingent beings. Having bodies, they are composed of and limited by any number of physical elements. Reviving the ancient thought of Empedocles, Wesley affirmed that humanity is a "strange compound of the four elements, earth, water, air, and fire."¹ Beyond this, he observes that homo sapiens are "a little portion of *earth*, the particles of which, cohering I know not how."² That is, men and women are not only rooted in nature but also restricted by it.

While Wesley hardly neglected the physical nature of human existence, he nevertheless also maintained that it can by no means constitute the true measure of humanity. He explains:

Consider we, first, What is man with regard to his magnitude? And in this respect, what is any one individual compared to all the inhabitants of Great Britain? He shrinks into nothing in the comparison. How inconceivably little is one compared to eight or ten millions of people? Is he not

"lost like a drop in the unbounded main"?³

Modern scientists have sometimes offered a diminished, reductionistic view of human beings by tallying up the worth of the chemical elements that make up the human body. In a similar fashion, some physicists and astronomers have pointed to the grandeur and size of the cosmos itself to underscore the insignificance of human beings, given their size, forgetting, however, that it was the human mind itself that began to understand something of the immensity of the universe in the first place. As William Cannon aptly pointed out, Wesley, in his own age, avoided each of these two principal errors, each of these underestimations of the wonder and glory of humanity: "John Wesley depicts man's significance in terms of his place neither in the physical order nor in the intellectual order but solely in the spiritual order."⁴

Second, as complex creatures, human beings, according to Wesley, are not simply bodies, but they have been created as spirits as well. Humanity "is not only a house of clay," Wesley cautions, "but an immortal spirit; . . . an incorruptible picture of the God of glory; a spirit that is of infinitely more value

than the whole earth; of more value than the sun, moon, and stars put together; yea, than the whole material creation."⁵ As a "compound of matter and spirit," Wesley notes, ". . . it was ordained by the original law that during this vital union neither part of the compound should act at all but together with its companion."⁶ Somewhat puzzled with respect to this soul and body interface, even though he acknowledges the distinctiveness of a "thinking principle" (Descartes' *res cogitans*), Wesley is not quite sure if this principle should be associated with the brain in general or with the pineal gland in particular. However, he avoids the materialist position, philosophically speaking, that human beings are simply bodies (and the various states that arise from the body) by affirming the independent and enduring reality of soul. "Unquestionably I am something distinct from my body," Wesley exclaims, "It seems evident that my body is not necessarily included therein."⁷

As embodied spirits, human beings are rooted in a created order and are subject to all the limitations of time and space. But because they have an immortal spirit that has been "made in the image of God, an incorruptible picture of the God of glory,"⁸ they are able to *transcend* the limitations of physical, bodily existence in any number of ways: by participating in the *formal* elements of intellectual life, by sensing a moral dimension, and by glorifying God in adoration and worship. "Consider, that the spirit of man is not only of a higher order, of a more excellent nature than any part of the visible world," Wesley reasons, "but also more durable, not liable either to dissolution or decay."⁹

The Image of God

The Threefold Image of God

Natural
Political
Moral

Reflecting upon the early chapters of the book of Genesis, Wesley explores the spiritual nature and transcendence of Adam and Eve precisely along the lines that they were beings created in nothing less than the image of God. In its most general sense, the *imago Dei* must be understood in a *relational* way as the very emblem of holy love. "God is love," Wesley observes, "accordingly man at his creation was full of love, which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions."¹⁰ In other words, both the mind and will of Adam and Eve, as well as their desires, were all properly oriented to God as their highest end. Being in proper *relation* to the Most High, they rightly enjoyed the fruits of serenity, grace, and innocence.

Beyond this, Wesley affirms that "love is the very image of God: it is the brightness of his glory."¹¹ Moreover, "by love man is not only made like God, but in some sense [is] one with him."¹² This union of love was not, of course, ontological in the sense that a distinction no longer existed between God and humanity with respect to *being*; rather it highlighted the goodness, truthfulness, and integrity of the relationship without detracting from the distinctiveness of the persons, so related, in the least. "As God is love," Wesley notes, "so man dwelling in love dwelt in God, and God in him."¹³

When Wesley explored the image of God in greater detail, he did so along three major lines. First of all, the **natural image** consists of a "spiritual nature and immortality of the soul,"¹⁴ which includes a principle of self-motion. As God is a spirit so, too, is humanity. "God did not make him [Adam] mere matter," Wesley writes, "a piece of senseless, unintelligent clay, but a spirit like himself (although clothed with a material vehicle)."¹⁵ Moreover, this immaterial principle or spiritual nature that characterizes human life is endowed with understanding, will, and liberty.

In terms of *understanding*—the first endowment of the natural image—

Wesley maintains that this is a "power of distinguishing truth from falsehood; either by a simple view . . . or by comparing one thing with another."¹⁶ Such a human power of knowing can be differentiated, in some respects, from that of God in that the former is necessarily marked by temporality, advancing by a process of ratiocination, of whatever duration, but the latter knowing is immediate in its grasp. This human understanding, though it can be distinguished from the divine, nevertheless was originally as perfect as it could be for a creature and was, according to Wesley, "capable of apprehending all things clearly, and judging concerning them according to truth, without any mixture of error."¹⁷

By the endowment of *will* Wesley has in mind the constellation of affections, passions, and tempers that at their creation were all rightly oriented to God as their greatest good. Adam's will, Wesley affirmed, "had no wrong bias of any sort, but all his passions and affections were regular, being steadily and uniformly guided by the dictates of his unerring understanding; embracing nothing but good."¹⁸ Though Wesley does indeed use the plural form of "affections" (the will exerting itself in various ways), he nevertheless contends that in a certain respect the affections of humanity at creation were but one: "Man was what God is, Love," Wesley exclaims, "Love filled the whole expansion of his soul; it possessed him without a rival."¹⁹ In other words, just as the understanding of Adam and Eve was rightly directed toward the *truth* so, too, was their will properly directed toward the *good* of the love of God.

The Elements of the Natural Image

Understanding
Will
Liberty

If the last endowment of *liberty* had not been added to the gifts of understanding and will, they would have been useless. Adam would have been "no more capable of serving his Creator than a piece of earth or marble," Wesley declares; "He would have been as incapable of vice or virtue as any part of the inanimate creation."²⁰ Accordingly, in creating human beings in the natural image of God, the Most High desired not only a genuine partner in which covenant *relations* could be established, but also beings who would find their perfection and purpose in the holy love of God, a love that can only arise and

thrive in freedom. Apart from moral and spiritual liberty, the freedom to choose goods and purposes, Adam and Eve would have been "as incapable of virtue or holiness as the stock of a tree."²¹ Moreover, though such freedom issued in both love and happiness (since it was rightly exercised at its inception), it also bore the possibility of misuse, of its deflection from the truth and goodness that is the divine being. "Man was made with an entire indifference, either to keep or change his first estate," Wesley notes; "it was left to himself what he would do; his own choice was to determine him in all things."²²

Though Wesley's understanding of the natural image is largely relational, it nevertheless contains aspects that make it seem, at times, as if its elements were grace-infused capacities. In a purely relational paradigm, for example, the elements of will and liberty would be ordered by the divine/human relation itself, whereby the Most High, through the divine presence in the life of the creature, would be the One to give shape and direction to both freedom and volition. In Wesley's view, however, it is the gift of understanding or reason that plays such an ordering role as evidenced in his following observation:

His [Adam's] will had no wrong bias of any sort, but all his passions and affections were regular, being steadily and uniformly guided by the dictates of his unerring *understanding*; embracing nothing but good, and every good in proportion to its degree of intrinsic goodness. His liberty likewise was wholly guided by his *understanding*: he chose or refused according to its direction.²³

The second aspect of the *imago Dei*, the **political image**, reveals that human beings are related not simply to one another and to God, but also to nature itself and other creatures.²⁴ In defining and explaining the features of this image, Wesley appeals to the language of Genesis and notes that humanity was given "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."²⁵ Elsewhere in his treatise *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, Wesley refers to humanity as "lord of this lower creation."²⁶ Such preeminence is naturally indicative of rule and governance. Indeed, when Wesley explores the order established in creation, the fitness of relations, he notes: "Man was God's viceregent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world."²⁷ So then, although God is the Governor par excellence, as the last chapter has argued, the Supreme Being has not claimed exclusive prerogatives here but has graciously allowed humanity to share in this rule and to exercise an authority over the lower creation. Here, humanity is distinguished in certain respects from the rest of creation, and a hierarchy of

sorts is indeed established. In other words, God as Governor does not rule in isolation but governs through appointed vice-regents.

But humanity's position within the created order can also be viewed another way, not so much in terms of rule and authority, or of a hierarchy for that matter, but with respect to the mediation of divine, bountiful grace. Humanity, according to Wesley, is the great conduit, the chosen channel, of God's blessings for the rest of creation and is therefore in some sense responsible for the general state of the animal realm.²⁸ This is, therefore, not a rule "over" in which *other* creatures are treated simply in an instrumental way, oblivious to the importance of appropriate relations, but a rule "with" and "for" the greater good of God. Simply put, as a genuine vice-regent or co-ruler, humanity cannot treat other creatures in a way that God, the Regent, would not. It is after all a joint rule, not an autonomous or heedless one. And in describing the original nature of this relationship of humanity and other creatures, Wesley observes:

As all the blessings of God in paradise flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off.²⁹

Moreover, it should also be noted that God has not only chosen to bless the lower creation through human beings, but also that "it is generally his pleasure," Wesley acknowledges, ". . . to help man by man."³⁰ The grace of God then often bears a human face.

And finally, the **moral image** is that dimension of the *imago Dei* that highlights the crucial truth that it was not just any love in which humanity was created but it was *holy* love. Taking Ephesians 4:24 (and Colossians 3:10) as his guide, Wesley develops this last aspect not only in terms of the state in which humanity was created, but also with an eye to the essence of true religion itself: "clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in *righteousness* and true *holiness*." In his treatise on original sin, Wesley states: Notwithstanding all the cavils which have been raised, yet if those two texts (Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10) are considered together, their obvious meaning will strike an honest and unbiased reader, the new man, or the principle of true religion in the heart, is created by God after his moral image, in that *righteousness* and true *holiness* wherein man was at first created.³¹

Beyond using the terminology of "righteousness and true holiness" to explore the moral image, Wesley also on occasion employed the phrases "universal righteousness" and "an incorruptible picture of the God of glory" to convey the

pristine and glorious state in which humanity was created.³² It should come as no surprise, then, that as Wesley considered the three elements of the *imago Dei*, he designated this last one the principal image. To illustrate, in his sermon "The New Birth," which was written in 1760, he writes, "So God created man in his own image . . . but chiefly in his *moral image*."³³

Realizing that much was at stake for his overall theology, Wesley focused on the moral image for three reasons: first, this image represents a dimension that distinguishes humanity from the rest of creation. That is, men and women, unlike the beasts of the field, are capable of God; they are able to worship the Most High in spirit and in truth, and their hearts can be filled with the holy tempers of love suitable to their noble estate. Wesley elaborates:

What [is] . . . the barrier between men and brutes? The line which they cannot pass? It was not reason. Set aside that ambiguous term: exchange it for the plain word, understanding, and who can deny that brutes have this? . . . But it is this: man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not. We have no ground to believe that they are in any degree capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the specific difference between man and brute—the great gulf which they cannot pass over.³⁴

Second, the moral image is likewise crucial because it is the context for the very possibility of sin. "Why is there sin in the world?" Wesley asks, "Because man was created in the image of God."³⁵ The moral image, in other words, is once again expressive of a *relation* to God, a relation that can be perverted and distorted through the pernicious effects of sin. So understood, the moral image (and the freedom it entails) represents the possibility either of humanity's glorification or of its debasement. Little wonder, then, that Wesley described it as the chief image.

Third, the moral image of God is intimately related to the moral law, a law that not only is "an incorruptible picture of the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity,"³⁶ as noted in the last chapter but also is expressive of the original nature in which humanity was created. At creation, then, the grace of God was so obviously and abundantly present, but so also was the moral law. Wesley explains:

In like manner, when God in his appointed time had created a new order of intelligent beings . . . he gave to this free, intelligent creature the same law as to his first-born children [the angels]—not wrote indeed upon tables of stone, or any corruptible substance, but engraven on his heart by the finger of God, wrote in the inmost spirit both of men and of angels— to the intent it might never be

far off, never hard to be understood; but always at hand, and always shining with clear light, even as the sun in the midst of heaven.³⁷

Accordingly, the moral law, an important window on the essence of the *imago Dei*, namely righteousness and holiness, highlights the similarities between the nature of God as well as the nature of humanity as originally created. This dual focus of the moral law, which, on the one hand, is "a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature,"³⁸ and, on the other hand, is "coeval with [humanity's] nature,"³⁹ indicates not only that there is a definite human nature according to Wesley,⁴⁰ but also that the grace of God is never conceived in isolation—not even at creation—but always in terms of the normative value of the moral law. For Wesley, then, the moral law is not the basis of the relationship between God and humanity, but it is nevertheless a standard that is expressive of the integrity of that relationship and that reveals both grace and righteousness (and sin as well) for what they are.

Moreover, if the creation of humanity in the moral image of God is considered only in terms of grace and not also in terms of the moral law, then grace, so conceived, will soon become amorphous, lacking its proper form in accordance with the divine mind that the moral law ably expresses. In Wesley's doctrine of salvation, then, grace is always "normed" grace; it arises and flowers in a valuational context and is thereby illuminated by the moral law of God, a standard that transcends, at least in some respects, human beings. Considering Adam's innocent state once more, Wesley points out: "This righteousness was the conformity of all the faculties and powers of his soul to the moral law."⁴¹ The original righteousness of humanity, then, was "universal, and natural, yet mutable."⁴² Indeed, without this other half of the conjunction, grace may quickly devolve into presumption, self-will, self-deception, and the antinomianism that Wesley so rightly deplored.

Part of the genius of Wesley's practical theology, then, is that it held together what is so often sundered in recent assessments in which the appeal to the relational nature of creation and redemption is used to minimize or outright reject the normative elements of the moral law as a window on the divine/human relationship itself. In such a misunderstanding, the moral law is supposedly "static," while the relationship to God is "dynamic." But this is to misconstrue matters with the result that the rich normative and prescriptive elements of Wesley's theology are left dangling and are not seen as an integral part of divine/human relations, especially in terms of their assessment. Indeed, for Wesley, the moral law not only expresses the *quality* of holiness as "unalterable

rectitude" but also displays "the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created," thereby joining together the standards of holiness, on the one hand, as well as the fitness of relations, on the other hand.

The Fall of Humanity

Since God is both gracious and good to humanity, and since human beings were created in the express image of this goodness, lacking nothing, how then did evil enter into the world? Wesley answers this important question initially not in terms of humanity, but in terms of Lucifer, that fallen angel often identified with the figure of Isaiah 14:12ff.⁴³ In his sermon "The End of Christ's Coming," for example, he explains:

It [evil] came from "Lucifer, son of the morning": it was "the work of the devil." "For the devil," saith the Apostle, "sinneth from the beginning"; that is, was the first sinner in the universe; the author of sin; the first being who by the abuse of his liberty introduced evil into the creation.⁴⁴

Beyond this, Wesley traces the origin of evil to the devil⁴⁵ and then later on to Satan.⁴⁶ Apparently, he makes little distinction between these names; all seem to refer to the same source of evil.

Following a well-established church tradition, Wesley conceives the essence of Lucifer's sin in terms of pride.⁴⁷ "Lucifer . . . of the first, if not the first archangel was self-tempted to think too highly of himself," Wesley notes; "He freely yielded to the temptation, and gave way first to pride, then to self-will."⁴⁸ So understood, satanic evil appears to be starkly irrational since it lacks a prior cause; it simply emerges in the context of both goodness and freedom as their perversions. However, when Wesley considers the fall of humanity, he distinguishes it in some important respects from the fall of Lucifer: the former succumbed to the temptation, to the lure of an active, external power of evil; the latter fell in the face of an entirely good creation. The devil, Wesley remarks, was "self-tempted."⁴⁹ Humanity was not.

Such a difference in terms of the source and origin of evil leads to a different estimation of the essence or root of evil in each instance. For Satan, self-temptation issued in pride, but for Adam and Eve, external temptation resulted in unbelief, a lack of trust in God, a break in the relations of holy love. Accordingly, when Wesley describes the fall of Eve in his writings, he maintains that Satan, as an external foil, mingled truth with falsehood so that "unbelief begot pride . . . it begot self-will."⁵⁰ Again Wesley underscores unbelief as the primal factor and exclaims: "Here sin began, namely, unbelief. 'The woman was deceived,' says the Apostle. She believed a lie: she gave more credit to the word

of the devil than to the word of God."⁵¹ And in his *Notes Upon the New Testament*. Wesley affirms, in his comments on Hebrews 3:12, that "unbelief is the *parent* of all evil, and the very essence of unbelief lies in departing from God, as the living God—the fountain of all our life, holiness, happiness."⁵²

The different origins of evil with respect to Lucifer and humanity can now be outlined as follows:

Satanic Evil

Self-Temptation → Pride → Self-Will → Evil Tempers and Affections

Human Evil

External Temptation → Unbelief → Pride → Self-Will Evil Tempers and Affections

For Wesley, then, the nature of human sin, its irreducible essence, is not pride, as is sometimes mistakenly supposed, but unbelief, the perversion of a *relationship* between God and human ity. A lack of faith in God, then, issuing in alienation, is the true foundation for the *subsequent* evils of pride and self-will. Indeed, in his *NT Notes*, Wesley describes unbelief as "the confluence of all sins."⁵³ In other words, out of alienation and unbelief, pride and self-will inevitably flow; out of alienation and unbelief every other evil disposition emerges. That this assessment is correct is also borne out in Wesley's further comments as he considers the solution to the problem of human wickedness: "As Satan began his work in Eve by tainting her with unbelief, so the Son of God begins his work in man by enabling us to believe in him."⁵⁴

The Effects of the Fall

The fall of humanity into sin, the descent into rebellion against the Most High, had a number of detrimental consequences. Indeed, as complex creatures, composed of body and soul, Adam and Eve experienced both physical and spiritual effects of their sin. Concerning the former, once the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil was tasted, "the sentence of death passed on that body, which before was impassive and immortal."⁵⁵ Again, prior to the fall, humanity had freely received its life from the Creator; now with that relationship despoiled, death held sway such that the body became "corruptible and mortal."⁵⁶ Just how this declension of the body occurred with respect to nature is a question that Wesley hardly considered though he did point out on one occasion: "May we not probably conjecture that there was some quality naturally in this which sowed the seeds of death in the human body, till then incorruptible and immortal!"⁵⁷ At any rate, so extensive was death's power that Wesley compared it to a kingdom and wrote:

Death reigned—And how vast is his kingdom! Scarce can we find any king, who has as many subjects, as are the kings whom he hath conquered! Even over infants who had never sinned, as Adam did, in their own persons; and over others, who had not, like him, sinned against an express law.⁵⁸

And in its wake, sin brought not only death, both physical and spiritual, but also "pain, sickness, and a whole train of uneasy as well as unholy passions and tempers."⁵⁹ Quoting Horace, Wesley observes:

After man, in utter defiance of his Maker, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, that

macies et nova februm

Terris incubuit cohors

that a whole army of evils, totally new, totally unknown till then, broke in upon rebel man, and all other creatures, and overspread the face of the earth.⁶⁰

Consequently, death as the wages of sin is "the very punishment threatened to Adam's first transgression."⁶¹ It is properly "not a benefit," Wesley notes, "but a punishment."⁶²

Second, the spiritual consequences of the fall appear to be even more horrific than the physical ones. In particular, Wesley notes that "Adam . . . brought pain, labour, and sorrow on himself and all his posterity; together with death, not only

temporal, but spiritual, and (without the grace of God) eternal."⁶³ Beyond this, the theme of spiritual death is likewise present in Wesley's doctrine of salvation as revealed in the following: "For the moment he [Adam] tasted that fruit he died. His soul died, was separated from God; separate from whom the soul has no more life than the body has when separate from the soul."⁶⁴ Again, "for in that instant [of sin] his original righteousness, title to God's favour, and communion with God being lost, he was spiritually dead, 'dead in sin'; his soul was dead to God . . ."⁶⁵ But if death, both physical and spiritual, is the fruit of sin, how then is Wesley's notion of the immortality of the soul, cited earlier, to be understood?

In an early manuscript sermon, "The Image of God," which Outler claims was, in fact, Wesley's first "university sermon,"⁶⁶ Wesley offers an answer to this significant question and writes that because of the fall of Adam the body became mortal and that "the soul felt a like change ⁶⁷ Here, in other words, Wesley maintains not only that the soul became mortal, but also that it will ever continue to exist—an apparent contradiction. However, if the ideas contained in this sermon are brought to bear on a later one, "Justification by Faith," it appears that the "death" of the soul recounted in each instance must be understood in a metaphorical sense: that is, the soul is dead in the sense that it is alienated from the life of God; nevertheless, it continues to exist.⁶⁸ That this interpretation is accurate is demonstrated by an appeal to a late sermon of Wesley's, "On Eternity," in which he maintains striking continuity with this earlier thought. "Their bodies indeed are 'crushed before the moth,' " he reasons, "but their souls will never die. God made them, as an ancient writer speaks, to be 'pictures of his own eternity.' "⁶⁹ Once again, the immortality of the soul is affirmed—even in the face of sin.

With the separation of the soul from the life of God, the source of its being, with the disruption of the relationship between the Creator and the creature, Adam naturally lost the favor of God in which he was originally created.⁷⁰ No longer did God look upon humanity with approval; no longer did men and women enjoy the rich blessings of the Most High in an uninterrupted fashion. And with this loss of favor went the loss of the image of God as well, leaving humanity in a truly accursed state. Wesley states:

It was by his willful rebellion against God that "sin entered into the world" . . . deprived of the *favour* of God, but also of his *image*; of all virtue, righteousness, and true holiness; and sunk partly into the image of the devil, in pride, malice,

and all other diabolical tempers; partly into the image of the brute, being fallen under the dominion of brutal passions and groveling appetites.⁷¹

In order to understand Wesley's teaching with respect to the Adamic loss of the *imago Dei*, it is perhaps best to organize the discussion under the same three aspects of natural, political, and moral images outlined earlier. Thus, concerning the first aspect, the natural image, Wesley relates that it was greatly marred but not utterly obliterated by the fall. Adam's *understanding*, for instance, though still in place, was now confused and often in error: "It mistook falsehood for truth, and truth for falsehood. Error succeeded and increased ignorance."⁷² Moreover, in order to answer why this error-ridden life was now a reality, Wesley employs the image of a glass becoming increasingly opaque, in a novel twist on Paul's darkened mirror of 1 Corinthians 13:12: "And no wonder, when it was no longer clear; when it not only saw through a glass, but darkly too, that glass being now grown thick and dull, having lost great part of its transparency."⁷³ Beyond this, the confusion and ongoing deception of Adam and Eve gave evidence of what Richard Taylor has called "The Great Delusion," the folly of "supposing that freedom is destroyed by law, and therefore our freedom lies in escape from law."⁷⁴

In similar fashion, *the will* of Adam was corrupted, overrun with such devilish passions as grief, anger, hatred, fear, and shame,⁷⁵ and suffered great harm "when its guide [the understanding] was thus blinded."⁷⁶ So great was this decline that even love itself, "that ray of the Godhead, that balm of life, now became a torment."⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the will, like the understanding, was not utterly destroyed. It indeed remained but in a perverted, debased form. That is, it was no longer directed toward a God of holy love as the chief end of its being, its highest purpose, its most lofty goal. Instead, it was overrun with a flood of idolatrous desires and affections and thereby repeatedly mistook the penultimate for the ultimate.

Just as Wesley discerned a connection between the corruption of the *understanding*, on the one hand, and the *will*, on the other, so, too, did he see a similar relation in terms of the will (with its constellation of virtues) and *liberty*. In his sermon "On the Image of God," Wesley elaborates: Liberty went away with virtue; instead of an indulgent master it was under a merciless tyrant. The subject of virtue became the slave of vice. It was not willingly that the creature obeyed vanity; the rule was now perforce; the sceptre of gold was changed into a rod of iron. Before, the bands of love indeed drew

him toward heaven; yet if he would, he could stoop down to earth. But now, he was so chained down to earth he could not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven.⁷⁸

So then with the corruption of the will, debased as it was, liberty fell away along with virtue; "instead of an indulgent master it was under a merciless tyrant. The subject of virtue became the slave of vice."⁷⁹

As expected, the political image, likewise, was greatly obscured by the fall. "As man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation," Wesley observes, "so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off."⁸⁰ To be sure, instead of humanity constituting a blessing to the rest of creation—through the mediation of graces and benefits from God—it was now a curse. "By his apostasy from God," Wesley declares, "he [Adam] threw not only himself but likewise the whole creation, which was intimately connected with him, into disorder, misery, death."⁸¹ Wesley develops this theme in greater detail in a sermon produced later in his career in which he observes:

As man is deprived of *his* perfection, his loving obedience to God, so brutes are deprived of *their* perfection, their loving obedience to man. The far greater part of them flee from him, studiously avoid his hated presence. The most of the rest set him at open defiance, yea, destroy him if it be in their power. A few only, those we commonly term domestic animals, retain more or less of their original disposition, and (through the mercy of God) love him still and pay obedience to him.⁸²

Put another way, Wesley affirms that the whole animated creation, from leviathan to the smallest mite, was " 'made subject' to such 'vanity' as the inanimate creatures could not be."⁸³

Since Wesley maintains that the moral image is the principal image of God in that it is a reflection of the very righteousness and holiness of the Supreme Being, the greatest disruption in the relation should be encountered here. And this is precisely what is found. For example, whereas Wesley taught, on the one hand, that the natural and political images were polluted or lost in part, he affirmed, on the other hand, that the moral image was *totally* lost. Wesley elaborates: "The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy; he was full of sin, full of guilt and tormenting fears."⁸⁴

Having lost the moral image of God, Adam sunk partly into "the image of the devil"⁸⁵ in pride, malice, and in other evil dispositions, and "partly into the image of the brute,"⁸⁶ having fallen under the power of brutal passions and degrading appetites. Therefore, Adam's change in his relationship to God, which was now a perverted one, affected the tempers of his heart, the seat of holiness and love, tempers that together constituted his basic orientation, his predisposition, toward all thought and action.⁸⁷ Put another way, relational change with respect to God, the fount of all life and holiness, necessarily resulted in dispositional change. The *imago diaboli* now replaced the *imago Dei*, and a rule of darkness replaced one of light. "The consequence of [their] being enslaved to a depraved understanding and a corrupted will," Wesley writes, "could be no other than the reverse of that happiness which flowed from them when in their perfection."⁸⁸ In short, Adam and Eve were unhappy precisely because they were unholy; their hearts were overrun with vile, tormenting affections; their innocence was lost.⁸⁹

Original Sin

The doctrine of original sin, which in a sense can be distinguished from the fall as to how the declension of Adam and Eve affected the rest of humanity, emerged out of the reflection of the church, especially in the writings of St. Augustine.⁹⁰ Simply put, the doctrine of original sin was conceived as the inheritance, both physical and spiritual, mediated to humanity by the fall. The traditional doctrine, then, underscored the use of such phrases as "the flesh," "inbred sin," or "the carnal nature" with respect to the *present* description of humanity. A classic expression of this doctrine, for Wesley, was found in the Anglican *Thirty-nine Articles*. The Ninth Article, for example, states:

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk); but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.⁹¹

However, when Wesley reproduced this article for the Methodists in America in his *Sunday Service*, he omitted the last phrase, "it deserveth God's wrath and damnation."⁹² Such an editorial change indicates that the principal emphasis of Wesley with respect to this doctrine was not in terms of the transfer of *guilt* to posterity but of the transfer, however understood, of a *corrupt* nature.⁹³ This latter element had been an emphasis of both early Eastern Fathers, such as Pseudo-Macarius, and later Roman Catholics.⁹⁴ Indeed, Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) in his counterreformation writings began a tradition whereby Rome interpreted original sin chiefly in terms of the loss of sanctifying grace and its attendant corruption,⁹⁵ a tradition of which Wesley was likely aware.

At any rate, so vital was the doctrine of original sin to John Wesley that in 1756, he crafted one of his largest treatises ever, *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience*, in response to an earlier work on the same topic by Dr. John Taylor. Of this dissenting minister's theological writings, Wesley had little good to say as revealed in the following excerpt from a letter written to Augustus Toplady in 1758:

I verily believe no single person since Mahomet has given such a wound to Christianity as Dr. Taylor. They are his books, chiefly that upon Original Sin,

which have poisoned so many of the clergy, and indeed the fountains themselves—the Universities in England, Scotland, Holland, and Germany.⁹⁶

Taylor's work was especially troubling to Wesley since it not only had challenged the relevance of this doctrine for an enlightened age but also had maintained an excessively optimistic view of humanity throughout: that is, moderate reason, a sound education, as well as proper socialization in the church were ever the way forward. However, by the late 1750s, according to Outler, Wesley had already sought "to compound the Latin tradition of total depravity with the Eastern Orthodox view of sin as disease."⁹⁷ In other words, Wesley, in accordance with the Council of Carthage (AD 418) and the Second Council of Orange (AD 529), distanced himself from the Pelagian notion that the substance of original sin consists not in *corruption* but in *imitation*.

Distinguishing himself in many respects from Taylor and from the Deists of his own age, Wesley declared that all who deny this vital doctrine, for whatever reason and with whatever justifications, "are but heathens still."⁹⁸ Moreover, he regarded the question (and others like it), "Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil?" as a virtual shibboleth to distinguish scriptural Christianity from paganism.⁹⁹ To strengthen his case even further, Wesley appealed to the *analogy of faith* and maintained that the three grand, fundamental, scriptural doctrines of the church are "original sin, justification by faith, and holiness consequent thereon."¹⁰⁰ The question to Dr. Taylor was now to the point:

Are *you* disserving the cause of inward religion, labouring to destroy the inward kingdom of God, sapping the foundations of all true, spiritual worship, advancing morality on the ruins of piety? Are *you* among those who are overthrowing the very foundations of primitive, scriptural Christianity? which certainly can have no ground to stand upon, if the scheme lately advanced be true. What room is there for it, till men repent? know themselves?¹⁰¹

Apparently, Wesley's concern, expressed in this context, grew out of his strong soteriological interests. In other words, if the problem (original sin) was repudiated or soft-pedaled—as it was by Deism and eighteenth-century rational religion—then perhaps the solution (the new birth) would be lost or misunderstood as well. And that this last point is no mere conjecture is demonstrated by an appeal to Wesley's observation: "This then is the foundation of the new birth—the *entire corruption* of our nature."¹⁰² In fact, the doctrine of original sin, along with justification by faith, and holiness of heart and life (the analogy of faith), were so crucial for Wesley that he deemed them the very

essentials of religion.^{[103](#)} In the preface to his treatise on original sin, for example, Wesley exclaims: "If, therefore, we take away this foundation, that man is by nature foolish and sinful, 'fallen short of the glorious image of God,' the Christian system falls at once."^{[104](#)}

How Original Sin Is Transferred

When Wesley considers just how original sin is communicated, so to speak, from Adam and Eve to the rest of humanity, he follows a well-worked Augustinian tradition fairly closely. Indeed, in developing his teaching, Wesley cites some of the very same scripture texts as did the Bishop of Hippo, most notably Genesis 3:1ff, Psalm 51:5, and, of course, Romans 5:12-21.¹⁰⁵ In fact, in a way similar to Augustine, Wesley applies the text of Psalm 51:5 not simply to the psalmist, but to all humanity: "We are all now shapen in wickedness, and in sin did *our* mother conceive us. *Our* nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty."¹⁰⁶ And again, Adam "begat a son in his own image, sinful and defiled, frail and mortal, and miserable like himself; not only a *man* like himself, consisting of body and soul; but a *sinner* like himself, guilty and obnoxious, degenerate and corrupt."¹⁰⁷

Concerning the Genesis passage, a key ingredient in any doctrine of original sin, Wesley elaborates on the Adamic inheritance and draws a contrast between the image of Adam, on the one hand, and the image of God, on the other:

That every reader may advert to this melancholy but important truth [Adam begat a son in his own likeness], it is enforced by a very emphatical repetition: "After his own image," as contradistinguished from that "image of God," mentioned in the preceding verse; which expressions are evidently intended to denote the difference between the state in which Adam was created and Seth begotten.¹⁰⁸

Accordingly, a change in relation to God, marked by unbelief, pride, and rebellion, not only despoils the Adamic *imago Dei* but also has ongoing consequences for posterity that though still reflecting the image of God (in some sense) also manifests the corrupted image of Adam.

In light of the preceding, it is clear that for Wesley, Adam was a representative of humanity, and what "he did in this capacity did not terminate in himself, but affected all whom he represented."¹⁰⁹ Put another way, Adam was a "public person, a federal head, a legal representative."¹¹⁰ Indeed, some of the clearest references to Adam as a federal head and representative of humanity are found in Wesley's notes on Romans 5:12 and 5:19. Concerning the first passage, for instance, Wesley writes: "As by *one man*—Adam; who is mentioned, and not Eve, as being the representative of mankind; *sin entered into the world*—actual

sin, and its consequence, a sinful nature; *and death*."¹¹¹ And of the second, he states: "*As by the disobedience of one man, many, that is, all men, were constituted sinners*—Being then in the loins of their first parent, the common head and representative of them all."¹¹²

This last passage, then, demonstrates that none are excepted from this sinful legacy, that all people, infants included, are de spoiled by sin. "Children themselves," Wesley contends, "are not innocent before God. They suffer; therefore, they deserve to suffer."¹¹³ This loss of innocence by infants, their involvement with sin, was logically evident to Wesley in that they endured the very same consequences of sin as did their progenitors, namely, suffering and death. "God does not look upon infants as innocent, but as involved in the guilt of Adam's sin"; Wesley reasons, "otherwise death, the punishment denounced against that sin, could not be inflicted upon them."¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, as Dunning points out, "in no way does this [guilt] involve . . . susceptibility to eternal punishment."¹¹⁵ In other words, none are lost because of any inherited guilt but only as a result of their own guilt. "God assures us," Wesley writes, "children 'shall not die for the iniquity of their fathers.' No, not eternally. I believe none ever did, or ever will, die eternally, merely for the sin of our first father."¹¹⁶ Why is this so? For one thing, Wesley had every confidence that the atoning work of Christ, a topic to be explored in the next chapter, is more than sufficient to cover the Adamic guilt that in some sense is mediated even to infants. "Everyone born of a woman may be an unspeakable gainer thereby; and none ever was or can be a loser but by his own choice."¹¹⁷

In light of this and other language, Harald Lindstrom claims that Wesley's assessment of Adam's relationship to humanity demonstrates an affinity with *Calvinist* federalism, in particular.¹¹⁸ "Adam," the Swedish scholar notes, "is presented . . . as the representative as well as the primogenitor of mankind."¹¹⁹ While this claim is, for the most part, accurate, it must be borne in mind that though Wesley was well acquainted with the language of Adam as a "representative" and as a "federal head," and though his own thinking does indeed resonate with such language, he never insisted on its usage. "But as neither representative, nor federal head, are scripture words," Wesley explains, "it is not worth while to contend for them."¹²⁰

Moreover, though Wesley initially claimed not to know or even to care much¹²¹ about how precisely sin as corruption is communicated to all humanity ("And if you ask me, how, in what determinate manner, sin is propagated; how it

is transmitted from father to son: I answer plainly, I cannot tell."),¹²² nevertheless, as Ward and Heitzenrater aptly point out, Wesley, after reading Henry Woolnor's *The True Original of the Soule*, came over to the view known as traducianism in 1762; that is, he affirmed that "the souls of his [Adam's] posterity, as well as their bodies, were *in* our first parent,"¹²³ and they were subsequently passed along to their descendants. Humanity fell, in other words, in Adam, with Adam, such that procreation now necessarily transmits a fallen soul.

Wesley, however, unlike Augustine, was careful not to link too closely the process of procreation itself with sin. To illustrate, in response to the observation that "if natural generation is the means of conveying a sinful nature from our first parents to their posterity, then [it] must itself be a sinful and unlawful thing," Wesley replies, "I deny the consequence. You may transmit to your children a nature tainted with sin, and yet commit no sin in so doing."¹²⁴

The Consequences of Original Sin

In order to offer an accurate picture of the sinful nature of humanity, Wesley recommends, among other things, that we "study to know the spirituality and the extent of the law of God; for that is the glass," he writes, "wherein you may see yourselves."¹²⁵ The moral law, then, will reveal the sin of human hearts; it will disclose the corruption of the *imago Dei* and thereby suggest some of the more pernicious consequences brought about by original or inbred sin.

Now Wesley explored in a number of writings the "spiritual legacy" which Adam bequeathed to humanity. For example, in his sermon "Original Sin," written in 1759, Wesley considers humanity in its natural state, that is, in a state unassisted by the grace of God, and he claims, as King David did before him, that men and women " 'are all gone out of the way' of truth and holiness; 'there is none righteous, no, not one.' "¹²⁶ Again, citing the Old Testament, but this time the prophet Isaiah, Wesley adds: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness."¹²⁷

Beyond the citation of Old Testament passages, Wesley provides a well-worked structure in this sermon, partly drawn from the First Letter of John, which describes more fully the present ills of humanity.¹²⁸ First of all, men and women are born into the world as *atheists*, marked by *unbelief*. "We [have] by nature no knowledge of God," Wesley writes, "no acquaintance with him."¹²⁹ Our natural understanding, in other words, apart from grace, does not lead to the knowledge of God. "And having no knowledge," he continues, "we can have no love of God: [for] we cannot love him we know not."¹³⁰

Alienated from the knowledge and love of God, encased in isolation, men and women immediately engage in a species of idolatry by worshiping themselves as the center of meaning in life. "We worship ourselves," Wesley points out, "when we pay that honour to ourselves which is due to God only."¹³¹ Again, "every man born into the world," Wesley exclaims, "is a rank idolater."¹³² And he develops this idea more fully in his treatise on original sin in which he writes: For though some of them "run well," they are still off the way; they never aim at the right mark. Whithersoever they move, they cannot move beyond the circle of self. They seek themselves, they act for themselves; their natural, civil, and religious actions, from whatever spring they come, do all run into, and meet in, this dead sea.¹³³

Second, *atheism* and idolatry, then, issue in *pride*; they result in the self-glorification whereby men and women "either [think] of them selves more highly than they ought to think, or [glory] in something which they have received as though they had not received it."¹³⁴ Indeed, the forces of self-absorption are so strong, held in place by the power of sin and deceit, that they cannot be broken but for the grace of God. And as Colin Williams points out, Wesley's notion of sin as self-curvature is remarkably similar to Luther's *cor incurvatum in se*.¹³⁵

The third aspect of the Adamic inheritance is *self-will*. "Pride is not the only sort of idolatry which we are all by nature guilty of," Wesley maintains; "Satan has stamped his own image on our heart in *self-will* also."¹³⁶ In fact, Wesley explores the present self-will of humanity against the backdrop of Satanic self-will and cites Isaiah 14:13, a passage that has been traditionally, though perhaps incorrectly, associated with Lucifer.¹³⁷ Wesley states:

"I will," said he [Satan], before he was cast out of heaven, "I will sit upon the sides of the north." I will do my own will and pleasure, independently on [sic] that of my Creator. *The same does every man born into the world say*, and that in a thousand instances.¹³⁸

Up to this point, original sin in the form of atheism, pride, and self-will mirrors satanic evil. However, "at the next step," Wesley writes, "we run into an idolatry whereof he is not guilty: I mean *love of the world*."¹³⁹ Taking 1 John 2:16 as his guide, Wesley develops this fourth aspect of original sin in terms of three components, namely, "the desire of the flesh," "the desire of the eye," and "the pride of life."

So then, unbelief (atheism), pride, self-will, and the love of the world in all its aspects is the inheritance that humanity has received from Adam and Eve. Again, since Adam lost the moral image of God, and the natural and political ones were greatly marred, this is the legacy, argues Wesley, that was passed along to his descendants. Again, "how wide do those parent sins extend, from which all the rest derive their being," Wesley asks; "Can we fix any bounds to them?"¹⁴⁰

Total Depravity

Considered apart from the grace of God, the present spiritual condition of humanity is suitably described as dark and bleak. To be sure, in his doctrine of original sin, Wesley employs what can only be described as "negative superlatives" to display the general moral and spiritual abyss into which humanity has descended. He remarks:

Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to the text, is "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart evil continually"? Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but a heathen still.^{[141](#)}

No doubt for emphasis, Wesley continues this theme of total depravity in several other pieces. In his "Way to the Kingdom," for instance, it is expressed in the comments: "Thou art corrupt ed in every power, in every faculty of thy soul, that thou art totally corrupted in every one of these, all the foundations being out of course."^{[142](#)} And in the sermon "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," it appears in the observation that "every 'imagination of the thought of man's heart is evil, only evil, and that continually.' "^{[143](#)} Moreover, in this same sermon Wesley stresses that men and women are incapable of altering their condition: "There is in the heart of every child of man an inexhaustible fund of ungodliness and unrighteousness, [so] deeply and strongly rooted in the soul that nothing less than almighty grace can cure it."^{[144](#)}

In a similar fashion, the language of total depravity, which many eighteenth-century champions of reason were loath to recognize, can be found in Wesley's other theological writings. In his *Notes Upon the New Testament*, for example, Wesley explores the depravity of human nature as well as the consequent need of Christ in all his offices. He elaborates:

We are by nature at a distance from God, alienated from him, and incapable of a free access to him. Hence we want a mediator, an intercessor, in a word, a Christ, in his priestly office. This regards our state with respect to God. And with respect to ourselves, we find a *total darkness, blind ness, ignorance of God and the things of God*. Now here we want Christ in his prophetic office, to enlighten our minds, and teach us the whole will of God. We find also within us a strange misrule of appetites and passions. For these we want Christ in his royal character, to reign in our hearts, and subdue all things to himself.^{[145](#)}

Beyond this, in his treatise on original sin, Wesley considers the corruption of human nature in terms of "a want of original righteousness," and also in terms of a "natural propensity to sin," indicating that depravity, so understood, not simply is a privation, a lack of goodness (as it has emerged in some Augustinian theologies), but is also an active power that predisposes the tempers of human hearts toward sin and disobedience.¹⁴⁶ Elsewhere in his writings, Wesley employs all of the following phrases to describe the depth and extent of original sin, apart from all grace: (1) "dead in trespasses and sins,"¹⁴⁷ (2) "ungodliness and unrighteousness,"¹⁴⁸ (3) "desperately wicked,"¹⁴⁹ (4) "only evil continually,"¹⁵⁰ and (5) "entire depravity and corruption."¹⁵¹

The language just cited is, of course, reminiscent of that used by the continental reformers, Luther and Calvin, in their descriptions of original sin. For his part, Luther in his *Lectures on Romans* argues that original sin involves "the loss of all uprightness. . . . It is a proneness toward evil; the loathing of the good; the disdain for light and wisdom but fondness for error and darkness."¹⁵² And such emphases are also maintained by the German reformer in his treatise *The Bondage of the Will*, a polemical work written in opposition to some of the teachings of Erasmus. Likewise, Calvin declares in his *Institutes* that "Paul removes all doubt when he teaches that corruption subsists not in one part only, but that none of the soul remains pure or untouched by that mortal disease."¹⁵³ Beyond this, the Genevan reformer asserts: "For our nature is not only destitute and empty of good, but so fertile and fruitful of every evil that it cannot be idle."¹⁵⁴

In terms of more modern assessments, George Croft Cell, early in the twentieth century, maintained that Wesley did indeed "plant his feet identically in footprints made by St. Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin."¹⁵⁵ Making a similar claim, William Cannon affirmed that Wesley, the Arminian theologian, "goes all the way with Calvin, with Luther, and with Augustine in his insistence that man is by nature *totally* destitute of righteousness and subject to the judgment and wrath of God."¹⁵⁶ Beyond this, Colin Williams contended that in terms of this fundamental doctrine, Wesley's approach was once again essentially western and "parallels closely the thought of Luther and Calvin."¹⁵⁷ All of this has led Richard Taylor to conclude with two key insights that result from a doctrine of original sin so understood:

Both Jacob Arminius and John Wesley were thoroughly Augustinian in the following respects: (a) The race is universally depraved as a result of Adam's

sin; (b) man's capacity to will the good is so debilitated as to require the action of divine grace before he can turn and be saved.^{[158](#)}

By way of contrast, the language of "total depravity" was hardly typical of Eastern Fathers, who much preferred to argue that Adam and Eve were not so fallen as to be unable to *respond* to any subsequent proffered grace. Citing this tradition, Maddox explains:

They [eastern theologians] did not hold that the Fall deprived us of all grace, or of the accountability for responding to God's offer of restored communion in Christ. That is, a characteristic Eastern Christian affirmation of co-operation in divine/human interactions remains even after the Fall.^{[159](#)}

Again, "the Fall did render us prone to sin, but not incapable of cooperating with God's offer of healing."^{[160](#)}

Though Wesley's and many eastern theologians' theologies end up in a similar "place," with humanity gifted to receive and respond to grace, they arrive at this soteriological point through much different routes and at very different "times." To be sure, it is precisely because Wesley affirmed the total depravity of original sin, apart from all grace, that God will have to act not simply as an initiator of grace (a stress on prevenient action) but also as the sovereign cause of *restoring* grace precisely in order to undo some of the more debilitating effects of sin and depravity before any sort of responsibility and cooperation can even reemerge. In short, for many eastern theologians, the fall leaves response-ability in place. However, for those such as Wesley who followed the Augustinian tradition, the effects of the fall are so devastating that response-ability along the way of salvation is not a possibility at all *unless* God first of all sovereignly restores humanity through prevenient grace to some measure of the relation previously enjoyed.

Prevenient Grace

Whereas Wesley differed from some of the Eastern Fathers in terms of his understanding of original sin, he differed from Augustine and the sixteenth-century reformers in terms of his understanding of grace. For while there does appear to be great similarity between Wesley's doctrine of original sin and that of western theologians, especially in the emphasis on total depravity, upon closer examination, however, there are important differences to be noted, largely due to different conceptions of grace. It must be borne in mind, for instance, that when Wesley uses the vocabulary of total depravity, he is referring to what he calls "the natural man," that is, to a person who is utterly without the grace of God. "From all these we learn concerning man in his natural state," Wesley writes, "*unassisted by the grace of God*, that 'all the imaginations of the thoughts ¹⁶¹ But does such a person actually exist? Not according to Wesley, for in the sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," he states: of his heart' are still 'evil, only evil', and that continually."

For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called "natural conscience." But this is not natural; it is more properly termed "preventing grace."¹⁶²

And again in this same sermon, Wesley adds, drawing on John 1:9, his principal text for prevenient grace: "Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world."¹⁶³ Indeed, Umphrey Lee correctly pointed out in his own day that for Wesley, the "natural man" is a logical abstraction that does not correspond to actual men and women. "In this world," he noted, "man exists as a natural man *plus* the prevenient grace of God."¹⁶⁴ However, by the use of the phrase "logical abstraction," Lee was not suggesting that the later Wesley had abandoned the assumption of inherent human inability.¹⁶⁵ On the contrary, he not only affirmed the ongoing dependence of humanity on the grace of God, but also maintained that though the effects of original sin are still present, they are no longer total. That is, humanity has a measure of light, due to the divine *restoring* presence, and that light is Christ.¹⁶⁶

In good Anglican fashion, Wesley supported his doctrine of prevenient grace

by an appeal to both Scripture and tradition, that is, by reference to the Gospel of John ("The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" [John 1:9]) and to the Anglican *Thirty-nine Articles*. However, this use of specifically Christian resources in no way limited the scope of this grace. Thus, Wesley asserted that prevenient grace, based upon the salvific work of Jesus Christ, is applied to all people, Christians and non-Christians alike, through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁷ "Every man has a greater or less measure of this," Wesley declares, "which waiteth not for the call of man."¹⁶⁸ Again, this grace is "free for all," not limited to the accidents of geography or culture, and it is "free in all to whom it is given," not dependent on any human power and merit.¹⁶⁹ It is inclusive not exclusive; freely given not merited. Moreover, this first glimmer of grace marks the entrance upon the path that leads to salvation, properly speaking, as is evident in Wesley's following observation: Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) "preventing grace"; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God.¹⁷⁰

Before we assess the benefits of prevenient grace in greater detail, it will perhaps be helpful to point out that Albert Outler had distinguished not one, but two, distinct uses of prevenient grace in Wesley's writings. The first use, which is "narrow," refers to all those degrees of grace that come *before* justifying and sanctifying grace.¹⁷¹ Such usage arose out of the heated debates between Calvinists and Arminians in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. To illustrate, the Arminians of that era appealed to the notion of prevenience in this first sense in order to avoid the Calvinist conclusion that a serious doctrine of original sin necessitated predestination understood in terms of unconditional election.¹⁷² In this setting, prevenience involves not only the general illumination of sinners that makes them responsible (again as a result of the work of Christ), but also the conviction of sin brought about by the ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Thus, by appeal to this tradition, Wesley sought, according to Outler, "to find a third alternative to Pelagian optimism and Augustinian pessimism with respect to the human flaw and the human potential."¹⁷³

The second use, which is "broad," views *all* grace as prevenient in that it emphasizes the *prior* activity of God as well as human response in every

measure of grace whether it be convicting, justifying, regenerating, or entirely sanctifying.¹⁷⁴ It can be found not only in the early church, among both eastern and western writers, but also later on in key Anglican sources. Article X, for example, of the historic *Thirty-nine Articles* declares:

The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he can not turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ *preventing* us, that we many have a good will, and working with us, when we have this good will.¹⁷⁵

Prevenience conceived in this broad way, in terms of the priority of divine action with respect to all grace, issues in divine/human cooperation, a genuine "working with," of which the article itself speaks. Such a synergism, which is perhaps best expressed in Wesley's sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," must, however, be carefully understood. For one thing, if prevenience in this broad sense, and in the context of cooperation, is made the exclusive paradigm through which all divine and human activity is conceived, then Wesley's theology will be misconstrued as hardly going beyond the notion of synergism. Those scholars who champion this view no doubt take comfort in the notion that this paradigm has a role for both divine and human action while it ever gives *priority* to the former. However, the notion of divine *priority* in and of itself is simply inadequate to encompass all that Wesley understood by the grace of God. Indeed, the conjunctive *style* of his theology is not, after all, fully or aptly expressed in the divine and human roles found in an overarching synergistic paradigm that privileges merely the "Catholic" or "Eastern" understanding of grace. On the contrary, more accurate readings suggest that a synergistic paradigm, which contains both divine and human acting, must itself be caught up in an *even larger conjunction* in which the Protestant (and Pauline!) emphasis on the *sole activity* of God (*sola gratia, sola fide*), apart from all human working, is *equally* factored in. Not simply co-operant grace, but the conjunction of co-operant and free grace. Consequently, prevenient grace, in the broad sense, must be understood in terms of *both* of these contexts, for free grace also illuminates the *priority* of divine action.

Moreover, in virtually every instance in which Wesley employs the term "prevenient grace" in his works, he is referring to prevenience not in a broad sense but in the narrow sense as defined above.¹⁷⁶ That is, prevenient grace comes before, and it points beyond itself to redemptive graces, properly speaking, even to the justifying favor and regenerating power of God. Therefore,

though the importance of divine initiative in all grace must not be undervalued, we will nevertheless employ the term "prevenient grace" in its narrow sense so that we can be especially attentive to the growth and development of believers, the qualitative differences, the transformation of being that takes place, as indicated by the *distinctiveness* of prevenient, convincing, justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying graces. Simply put, prevenient grace in the narrow sense, though it is indeed a blessing from the Most High, does not make one *holy*, properly speaking.

The Benefits of Prevenient Grace

In his writings, Wesley points out five benefits that are conveyed to humanity by prevenient grace, which together mitigate some of the worst effects of the fall.¹⁷⁷

First of all, in his commentary on Romans 1:19, Wesley asserts that a basic knowledge of God, chiefly in the form of the divine attributes (such as omnipotence, eternity, and so on), is revealed to all men and women as a result of the prevenient agency of the Holy Spirit. Once again, humanity has not been left in the natural state, devoid of all grace and therefore knowing nothing of God, but all people have at least some understanding of God, however clouded or scant this knowledge may be. In his *Notes Upon the New Testament*, Wesley explains: "For what is to be known of God—Those great principles which are indispensably necessary to be known, 'is manifest in them; for God hath showed it to them'—By the light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world."¹⁷⁸ Since this knowledge is universal and independent of special revelation, some scholars contend that it forms the basis for a natural theology.¹⁷⁹ Others are quick to point out, however, that though a *theologia naturalis* is indeed in the offing, it never occurs apart from *grace*—a grace that may or may not even be acknowledged in the celebration of reason and its powers.

Second, since men and women, apart from the grace of God, are spiritually dead, they have neither the ability nor the inclination to comprehend the dictates of God's holy law, the same law that was inscribed on their hearts at creation and which is expressive of the image of God. Nevertheless, Wesley affirms that after the fall, God did not leave men and women in this utterly dejected state, but reinscribed, in some measure, a knowledge of this moral law upon their hearts. He writes:

But it was not long before man rebelled against God, and by breaking this glorious law wellnigh effaced it out of his heart; . . . And yet God did not despise the work of his own hands; but being reconciled to man through the Son of his love, he in some measure re-inscribed the law on the heart of his dark, sinful creature.¹⁸⁰

- (1) Basic Knowledge of the Attributes of God
- (2) Re-inscription of the Moral Law
- (3) Conscience
- (4) A Measure of Free Will Graciously Restored
- (5) The Restraint of Wickedness

Third, in his "Thoughts Upon Necessity," produced in 1744, Wesley reveals that the ultimate origin of conscience is neither nature nor society, but God Almighty. "It is undeniable, that he has fixed in man, in every man," he writes, "his umpire, con science; an inward judge, which passes sentence both on his passions and actions, either approving or condemning them."¹⁸¹ And in his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," produced in 1765, Wesley closely identifies the operations of conscience with prevenient grace in particular. Beyond this, in his sermon "On Conscience," written a couple of decades later, the seasoned Wesley continues to argue that although in one sense conscience may be viewed as natural, since this faculty appears to be universal, yet, properly speaking, "it is not *natural*; but a supernatural gift of God, above all his natural endowments."¹⁸²

Fourth, since Wesley taught a doctrine of original sin similar in many respects to the Protestant Reformers, he obviously denied that human beings possess natural free will.¹⁸³ In other words, apart from grace, humanity is a mass of sin. Roman Catholicism, however (and in a way similar to Eastern Orthodoxy), contended that though free will had been weakened by the fall, it had not been extinguished or lost,¹⁸⁴ a point alluded to earlier. In fact, John Cassian, who founded two monasteries near Marseilles and whose *Institutes* had an effect on the Benedictine Rule, tried to find a compromise between the position of Augustine and Pelagius. This gifted monk contended that though all people are sinful as a result of the fall, their wills are simply weakened but not totally corrupted. Men and women are, therefore, free enough to cooperate with grace. With such views in place, this catholic tradition, according to Wiley, must therefore be judged "semi-Pelagian in [its] beliefs."¹⁸⁵ Indeed, Cassian's teaching on freedom and co-operant grace was condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529 in favor of a modified Augustinian one. However, what kept Wesley's theology clear of semi-Pelagianism, on the one hand, as he faced Rome, and from determinism (the elimination of moral responsibility and so on), on the other

hand, as he faced Wittenberg and Geneva, was the affirmation that a certain measure of free will is supernaturally restored by the Holy Spirit (based upon the work of Christ), to all people who, apart from such a restoration, are not free, soteriologically speaking. For example, in his treatise "Predestination Calmly Considered," written in 1752, Wesley observes:

But I do not carry free-will so far: (I mean, not in moral things:) Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I only assert, that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which "enlightens every man that cometh into the world."¹⁸⁶

And in 1772, in his "Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review," Wesley continues the theme and offers a sophisticated balance: "We [Wesley and Fletcher] both steadily assert that the will of man is by nature free only to evil. Yet we both believe that every man has a measure of free-will restored to him by grace."¹⁸⁷

In his own engaging work on prevenient grace, Charles Rogers cautions those interpreters who attempt to read Wesley on this salient issue simply in terms of an overarching, synergistic paradigm (Catholic emphasis) apart from a consideration of grace as a sheer, utter (free) gift (Protestant emphasis):

It has been quickly and uncritically assumed that Wesley's statements concerning free will are adequately understood as meaning that unregenerate man, through prevenient grace, is able as an act of free will to respond to grace when offered, and co-operate actively with grace in offering repentance or accepting faith. Part of the task before us is to demonstrate the inadequacy of this interpretation.¹⁸⁸

In short, Wesley, once again, sought a third alternative that would "maintain the sovereign causality of grace but avoid divine determinism."¹⁸⁹

Beyond this, as Albert Outler has correctly noted, Wesley's sophisticated understanding of a graciously restored free will, the presence of prevenient grace, separated his theology in an important respect, even from that of Jacob Arminius as well. For example, "Arminius held that man hath a will to turn to God *before* grace prevents him," Outler writes, "whereas, for Wesley, it is the Spirit's prevenient motion by which 'we ever are moved and inspired to *any* good thing.'"¹⁹⁰ And this consideration gives added credence to Wesley's claim made at the Methodist conference in 1745 that he and his preachers had come "to the very edge of Calvinism" by ascribing all good to the grace of God and by denying natural free will and merit.¹⁹¹

Fifth, prevenient grace expressed as a limited knowledge of God's attributes, as an understanding of the moral law, as the faculty of conscience, and as a measure of free will supernaturally restored, has the cumulative effect, which

can be distinguished from each of the preceding instances, of restraining human wickedness, of placing a check on human perversity. In fact, in his "Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Third," Wesley describes "the braking effect" that prevenient grace (and providence) has on human evil, in this instance, with respect to the hatred directed against the sons and daughters of God. He writes: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, [. . .] therefore the world hateth you." Yea (setting aside what exceptions may be made by the preventing grace or the peculiar providence of God) it hateth them as cordially and sincerely as ever it did their Master.¹⁹² And again, in his notes on Romans 1:24, Wesley points out that God withdrew "his restraining grace" from the obstinate and rebellious, from those who remained in idolatry.¹⁹³

Clearly, this fifth conception of prevenient grace is similar in some respects to Luther's orders of creation and preservation and, on a more modern note, to Bonhoeffer's mandates. In other words, here the grace of God checks human evil, at least to some extent, even among those people who care little for God and even less for the church. Unfortunately, however, Wesley never fully developed his notion of grace in this area.

In light of the foregoing exploration of Wesley's doctrines of grace, law, and sin, a number of summary observations are in order:

First of all, these five aspects of prevenient grace—just explored and that represent a restoration of faculties that cannot exist apart from the grace of God—can be distinguished from the prevenient activity of God, which entails *the calling* of sinners to salvation *through* these graciously restored faculties.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, it is one thing to have (partially) renewed faculties; it is yet another thing to hear the call of God through these same faculties. Prevenient grace, as Wesley understood it, embraces both of these meanings.

Second, since Wesley's doctrine of original sin underscores the notion of total depravity, then it logically follows that "irresistible grace" has to operate at least at some point in the Wesleyan order of salvation.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, this may come as a surprise to those Methodists who have been schooled on the notion that irresistible grace is a topic more suited to Calvinists. Nevertheless, since men and women in the natural state, according to Wesley, do not even have the freedom to accept or reject any offered grace, then this gift itself must be graciously and *irresistibly* restored. In other words, to deny that prevenient grace is irresistible in terms of graciously restored faculties is also to deny that Wesley held a doctrine of *total* depravity. Note, however, that irresistibility in this

context pertains not to the call or overtures made to these faculties (that can be resisted) but to the reestablishment of these faculties that constitute responsible personhood and accountability.

Two objections are often raised against the Wesleyan understanding of irresistible grace. The first, for example, assumes that a viable person, soteriologically speaking, is already in place; and therefore the grace of God overruns the self in a deterministic way for the sake of the larger good of restoration and redemption. In a similar fashion, the second objection assumes an addressable person already exists because total depravity has been subtly repudiated or redefined (trading on a notion of responsibility that has not yet been reestablished); and this self, so construed, is then equipped with various faculties. However, both of these objections involve a serious misunderstanding of the concept of prevenient grace as Wesley understood it. That is, such views fail, once again, to take the Methodist leader's notion of *utter* corruption seriously and thereby continually presuppose the reality of an accountable person even before the renewal of prevenient grace itself. If, however, it is admitted that the restored faculties of prevenient grace actually constitute the self in some sense by making it *response-able*, and given Wesley's doctrine of total depravity, then such free grace must of necessity be irresistible in the manner already suggested, that is, the work of God alone. Indeed, for Wesley, it is prevenient grace that restores the very elements required for responsible personhood and accountability in the first place—*so destructive are the effects of (original) sin*.¹⁹⁶ The following chart displays this difference in terms of the two leading paradigms of interpretation:

Western (Arminian) Paradigm	
The Fall → Original Sin (Total Depravity) → Prevenient Grace → Accountability and Freedom to Receive <i>and</i> Respond <i>Restored</i> by Free Grace → Co-operant Grace	
Eastern Paradigm	
The Fall → Original Sin (No Total Depravity) → Grace in Terms of Accountability and Freedom to Respond Remains Uninterrupted → Co-operant Grace	

Again, prevenient grace is not irresistible in the sense that a personality is overrun or that a viable, accountable self already exists and is simply provided with faculties. Rather, such grace is necessary, indeed is prior in the best sense of

the term "pre-venience," in order to bring into being a response-able self in part *precisely by restoring faculties*. Simply put, the inception of the process of salvation requires not co-operant grace (a sheer impossibility at this point) but free grace, the activity of God *alone*.^{[197](#)}

Moreover, understanding prevenient grace, at least in some sense, as a species of free grace demonstrates, once again, that Wesley highlighted the sheer graciousness, the utter benevolence, the necessary initiative, of a loving God in a way remarkably similar to that of John Calvin. Wesley's claim, then, of being within a hair's breadth of the Genevan leader's theology with respect to some important doctrines was no empty boast. One of the chief differences, however, between Calvinism and Wesleyanism is at what point in the *ordo salutis* irresistible grace occurs. For Calvin, it is sanctifying grace that is irresistible; for Wesley, it is prevenient grace that "waiteth not for the call of man."^{[198](#)}

And finally, it should be apparent by now that although the continental reformers and Wesley all assented to a doctrine of total depravity, the basic contours of their theologies remain distinct, due to different conceptions of grace. Thus, on the one hand, Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace allows him to hold together, without any contradiction, the four motifs of total depravity, salvation by grace, human responsibility, and the offer of salvation to all. Calvin and Luther's theology, on the other hand, can only hold the first two motifs together, and their doctrines of pre destination and election explain why all will not be saved.

Today and Tomorrow: Contemporary Views of the Self

Though Wesley did not often develop the philosophical implications of some of his anthropological views, they can be inferred from what affirmations he did indeed make. Thus, for example, his doctrine of total depravity along with the significant restoration that occurs as a result of prevenient grace suggests that a transcendent self exists, which cannot be utterly equated (though is strongly associated) with the panoply of graciously restored faculties but must, in some sense, be distinguished from them. To illustrate, in Wesley's view, the self *has* a conscience as it hears the voice of another, even the call of the Holy Spirit, through this gift. This faculty, in other words, can be differentiated in some sense from the self that is called into account by means of it. Again, the graciously restored freedom of prevenient grace, although it too entails the renewal of the self, making it response-able, nevertheless can be distinguished from the self in that liberty is not an independent, discreet reality but is descriptive of the *one* who is related, in an accountable fashion, to a God of holy love.

Such an understanding of the self, however, has fallen on hard times in a postmodern context in which the notion of an integrated, unified subject is seen not as "the reflection of a real phenomenon but as the product of the discourse of Enlightenment rationality and bourgeois individualism."¹⁹⁹ Drawing on the insights of Berger and Luckman, many cultural theorists contend that the self is socially constructed and is actually a function of various public discourses.²⁰⁰ That is, just as no private language exists, so, too, no private integrated self exists. The self, so construed, not only is radically contingent but also sits at the nexus of various discourses, strung out like a web in society, such that no discrete identity emerges apart from these discourses or from the social realities that give rise to them. "I [experience] myself as a social construct," Martin observes, "the product of my class, gender, generation, and of my church."²⁰¹ This postmodern identity that does not, by the way, correspond either to a traditional notion of the self (hailing from the Enlightenment) or to a common sense notion, may oddly enough result in frenzied self-seeking, "the pursuit of an identity in relationships with others as co-participants in a social group that is the bearer of a paradigmatic narrative,"²⁰² in order to fill the void.

Behind Rorty's claim that human beings are "centerless networks of beliefs

and desires and that their vocabularies and opinions are determined by historical circumstance"²⁰³ lie a number of assumptions with respect to metaphysics and epistemology that can be called into question. Building on the prospect of a diversity of interpretations, all of which are socially situated, Rorty's work follows the nihilism of Nietzsche with respect to the death of God and applies the same social and historical constructionist method to the self, which it likewise deems to be empty and dead. In a similar fashion, Foucault has claimed that "man is an invention of recent date,"²⁰⁴ an invention that "can be erased like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea."²⁰⁵

In his careful work on the spirituality of Thomas Merton (who used the notion of a "false self" in his spiritual writings), Webster has chronicled this nihilistic turn with respect to both God and the self found among postmodern theorists. He argues that with the loss of the Cartesian God, undermined by radical empiricists early on and by postmodern deconstructionists today, Descartes' *res cogitans* was impossible to maintain. In other words, "Descartes's cogito could remain intact as long as God was retained. Meddle with the concept of God and its place in the foundational principles of scientific inquiry, however, and the self becomes fractured and knowledge devolves into illusion."²⁰⁶ This connection between the death of God and the human self may in the end, ironically enough, serve to underscore that the reality of human beings, complex as it is, does indeed image the being of God. In other words, what is missed, methodologically speaking, in terms of the divine being is likewise missed with respect to humanity. The fate of one is the fate of the other. The "death" of each, therefore, may be more a function of the methodology employed (in its restricted scope) than of anything else.

To be sure, though postmodernism claims to offer an improvement over modernistic readings of humanity, it nevertheless continues with the same kind of reductionism and methodological hegemony that marked the logical positivists of the early twentieth century (Schlick and Carnap among them) and the radical scientific empiricists later on who, like B. F. Skinner, maintained that a human being is merely a repertoire of behavior and is, therefore, utterly explicable in terms of science in general and the environment in particular. "Man is much more than a dog," Skinner admits, "but like a dog he is *within* range of a scientific analysis."²⁰⁷ In a similar fashion, the postmodern turn, in its celebration of social location, temporality, and the narratives of various communities, gives the socially constructed environment an inordinate role that can only issue in the death of self. Socor elaborates:

The self is neither a stable nor an intrinsic entity but is, instead, the chronicle which emerges from coherently connecting and thus imbuing with meaning otherwise discrete and disparate events. The very concept of an unchanging and *personal* self which lays claim to ontological or epistemological priority is itself a postmodern fiction.²⁰⁸

What has been methodologically ignored in each instance, whether through positivism or deconstructive postmodernism, is the reality of *transcendence* in which the self participates and has its life. This dimension, which is integral to the understanding of self as Wesley conceived it (addressable, free, and accountable), shows up as a blank on the photographic plate, so to speak, of methodologies that *assume* the positivistic critique of the self had indeed been accurate. However, it must be quickly added that not all postmodern theorists agree with this larger project of deconstruction. In fact, Jerry Gill offers a *constructive* model in his carefully written work *Mediated Transcendence* and suggests many helpful ways in which the reality of transcendence, integral to comprehending the full range of human experience, can be both recognized and affirmed on the other side of modernity.²⁰⁹

Given the work of Gill and others, the notion of a transcendent self, which cannot be utterly identified with any single perception (remember Hume!) or with the context that gives rise to it, can be posited quite appropriately in the absence of any conclusive falsification. In other words, like the existence of God, the transcendent self that *has* perceptions, senses the guilt of conscience, or participates in loving other-directedness is not the kind of reality that can be either proved or disproved by the methodologies of either positivism or deconstructive postmodernism. Therefore, to proceed as if the transcendent self is no longer an option, a useful paradigm, with respect to the larger anthropological question is part of what we are calling the postmodern *pretense*.

At its very least, a transcendent self can be affirmed, drawing on some insights from Kant, if only for the sake of the *order* that it brings to the variety of human experiences over time. In other words, the self is not simply the enumeration of disparate experiences however socially construed; the whole is, after all, greater than the sum of the parts. Moreover, the "greater" that is not discerned by reductionist methodologies not only illuminates the transcendent self indirectly, without fully revealing it, but also suggests that it is not actually available, near at hand, for any sort of objective verification. Put another way, the intangible reality of the transcendent self, which some call the soul, can be mediated by means of tangible reality (that is, through thought, language, and

action) and in some manner recognized, though it can hardly be proved. Moreover, this self cannot be known apart from the particulars of the tangible, that is, on a personal level in terms of embodied existence and on a group level in terms of social context; but at the same time, "it cannot be reduced to an account of those particulars."²¹⁰ This means that an element of mystery will always surround the notion of a transcendent self that can be revealed only partially and indirectly in its unfolding over time.

Though Wesley did not employ the specific language of the transcendent self in his writings, he nevertheless assumes its reality in several places especially in his teaching that prevenient grace, in terms of graciously restored faculties, is both enabling ("God works, therefore you can work") and renders one accountable ("God works, therefore you must work").²¹¹ That is, though the restored faculties of prevenient grace issue in a response-able self, these same faculties do not utterly constitute that self. Beyond this, Wesley continually underscored that the very substance of salvation entails overcoming alienation and unbelief precisely in order to be properly related to God, a relation marked by both holiness and love. But for Wesley, contrary to some postmodern assumptions, it was never simply a matter of relations, pure and simple, because there is *always* a significant "who" to be considered at each end, so to speak, of the divine human correspondence. In other words, just as the "who" of God, the divine essence, is not a "nothing" or a "void," so, too, the "who" of humanity is not empty either, for it bears nothing less than the impress of the divine being. And it is the increasing understanding of that divine "who," so uncanny and mysterious, and in whose image and likeness humanity has been created, that marks the very beginnings of redemption: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves.²¹²

ChapTer Three

Jesus Christ: The God of Holy Love Revealed

*Hail, God the Son, with glory crown'd
When time shall cease to be
Throned with the Father through the round
Of whole eternity.*

—Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley. The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 2:360.

The holiness and love of God radiate throughout all eternity. The prevenient action of the Most High, based upon the life and work of Jesus Christ, is not limited by time, culture, or space, but its benefits have *already* been richly enjoyed by those who have lived centuries before the advent of the Messiah or by those even today who have never heard the name of Christ. In a real sense, Jesus of Nazareth, the Jew from Galilee, is at the very center of salvation history. That is, not only have many peoples and nations looked forward to his coming, but also many have grown in wisdom and grace as a consequence of his appearance.

John Wesley's theology of holy love naturally displays the centrality of Christ in its reflections, counsels, and ministry. Indeed, there is hardly an aspect of Wesley's practical theology that is not christologically based: whether one considers the created order, the first glimmers of redemption itself, or the coming reign of God, all are important windows on the grace and excellence of Christ. Precisely because this christological material is so extensive, it will be presented along the lines of the person and work of Christ for the sake of both clarity and order. Along the way we will consider the two natures of Christ (divine and human), the significance of his coming (the incarnation), the cruciality of his death (atonement), as well as his ministry as a prophet, priest, and king.¹ In the end it should be apparent just why Wesley's theology is so deeply rooted in Christology at every step along the way, for his thought underscores not only the seriousness of sin and human need but also the sufficiency of God's grace and

provision.

The Person of Christ

The very language of the "person" of Christ grew out of the deliberations of the early church, especially as reflected in the works of the Cappadocian Fathers (Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great, and Gregory Nazianzus). What the ancient community of faith intended by the term "person" (hypostasis), as it articulated a biblical understanding of the relation of Christ (the Word or Logos made flesh) to God/Father, in contrast to the construal of Arius, can also be distinguished from some lingering modern conceptions that have placed a premium on autonomy and individualism.

To illustrate, for the Cappadocian Fathers, the meaning of the term "person" was infused by the theological task before them, whereby they placed a premium on the whole matter of "relation," that is, on the relation of the Word to the Father, the begotten to the unbegotten. So understood, a person is not an "individual," separate or self-contained, but represents in a salient and defining way a relation to the "other." Therefore, to understand the person of Christ aright, he must be conceived in terms of his relation to both God/Father and humanity: as the Logos, the Son of God, Christ is not alone but has his being eternally as the only begotten One from the Father. As the Son of Humanity (the Logos made flesh), Christ is related to the human community of which he is its redemptive expression. Again, the one person of Christ, as the Logos made flesh, is related both to God/Father and to humanity. And it is precisely this double relation of Christ that Wesley most often explored under the heading of one person and two natures.

The Divine Nature

In accordance with the early tradition of the church, Wesley affirmed that the one person of Jesus Christ exists in two natures: the divine and the human. Elaborating on the former in several places in his writings, Wesley echoes the language of the ancient ecumenical councils, Nicea and Constantinople, in particular. In his sermon "Spiritual Worship," for instance, which was drafted late in his career, he points out that the inspired writers of the New Testament gave Christ all the titles and attributes of the most high God, eternity among them.² Wesley also explored the eternity of the Son in terms of the important distinction of *a parte ante* and *a parte post*, which was described in considerable detail in chapter 1. Recall also from this previous discussion that it is God alone, not any created being or thing, who is eternal *a parte ante*. This, then, is a unique characteristic, a divine trait. And since the Son, according to Wesley, is eternal in precisely this way, Jesus Christ is therefore truly and fully God. We, therefore, "need not scruple," he declares, to pronounce Christ, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God: in glory equal with the Father, in majesty coeternal."³

Moreover, when Wesley considered with what authority Jesus proclaimed the Sermon on the Mount, he made it clear that such authority must be distinguished from that of Moses, Abraham, the Prophets, or any other created being for that matter. So understood, this authority "is something more than human; more than can agree to any created being. It speaks the Creator of all!" Wesley exclaims, "a God, a God appears! Yea, ó wv, the being of beings, Jehovah, the self-existent, the supreme, the God who is over all, blessed for ever!"⁴ By employing such language, especially in its emphasis on being, Wesley celebrated the *essential* equality of Jesus Christ with the Father. "If our Lord were God only by office or investiture, and not in the unity of the Divine essence, and in all respects equal in Godhead with the Father," Wesley reasons, "he could not be honoured *even as*, that is, with the *same* honour that they honoured the Father."⁵ Beyond this, Wesley concurred with the teaching of his own Anglican Church, which in its Second Article of the historic *Thirty-nine Articles* stated that "the Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, [is] of one substance with the Father."⁶ In all this material, then, in affirming that the Son is consubstantial (of the same substance) with the Father, Wesley rejects even the slightest hint of

subordinationism (that the Son is not equal to the Father), and in his "On Knowing Christ after the Flesh," produced in 1789, he repudiates Arianism and other low Christologies, Socinianism in particular.⁷

Two of Wesley's favorite ways of affirming the essential equality of Christ with God/Father were through the titles "the (only-begotten) Son of God," and "the Word of God." In terms of the first, Wesley explores such language in one of his more prominent christological "treatises," *A Letter to a Roman Catholic*, and once again his words reverberate with the tones of Niceae and Constantinople: "I believe he is the proper, natural *Son of God*, . . . very God of very God; and that he is the Lord of all, having absolute, supreme, universal dominion over all things."⁸ Elsewhere in his *NT Notes*, as he comments on Luke 22:70, Wesley views the ascription "the Son of God" not simply as a messianic one but as one that also underscores the divinity of Christ in a forthright way. "Both these, the Son of God, and the Son of Man, were known titles of the Messiah"; he observes, "the one taken from his Divine, and the other from his human nature."⁹

In terms of the second designation, "the Word of God," Wesley discerned a dynamic relation between God/Father and the Son. That is, the evocative, calling, speaking power of the Most High is evident in Wesley's observation that the Son is "*the Word* whom the Father begat or *spoke* from eternity."¹⁰ This speaking, so conceived, is not temporal but eternal and is indicative of both *being* and *relation*. Put another way, the Word of God has been *eternally* spoken by the Father; never was a time when the Word was not. Commenting on the Johannine prologue (John 1:1), a key passage on this topic, Wesley observes that the Word is "the only begotten Son of the Father, who is in the bosom of the Father, and *hath declared him*."¹¹ Moreover, being *with* the Father as the spoken Word of the Most High, this declared Word, according to Wesley, "denotes a perpetual tendency as it were of the Son to the Father, in unity of essence."¹² Simply put, "He was *with* God alone; because nothing beside God had then any being."¹³

Though God/Father begets the Son and declares the Word, it was the Son who was intimately involved in the creation of the world as well. He is " 'the true God', the only Cause, the sole *Creator* of all things"¹⁴ and the "true '*Author* of all' the *motion* that is in the universe."¹⁵ Furthermore, Wesley notes, "When all things began to be made by the Word: in the beginning of heaven and earth, and this whole frame of created beings, the Word existed, without any beginning."¹⁶

Observe in this context that the Son's role in creation is not simply an instrumental one in which God/Father creates *through* the Son. On the contrary, Wesley maintained that "we cannot doubt but when the Son of God had finished all the work which *he created and made*, he said 'These be thy bounds! This be thy just circumference, O world!' "¹⁷ More to the point, Wesley contended that it was the only-begotten Son of God who pronounced the very words of Genesis, "Let there be light."¹⁸

Not only is the Son intimately involved in the creation, bringing forth the world and its many creatures, but also as " 'the true God' he is also the *Supporter* of all things that he hath made."¹⁹ That is, the Son sustains all things by the word of his power, "by the same powerful word which brought them out of nothing."²⁰ In a similar fashion, the Son of God is "the *Preserver* of all things."²¹ He is not only the Author of all motion in the universe,²² but also "the life of everything that lives . . . [as well as] the fountain of all the life which man possesses." In his sermon "Spiritual Worship," Wesley elaborates:

He not only keeps them in being, but preserves them in that degree of well-being which is suitable to their several natures. He preserves them in their several relations, connections, and dependences, so as to compose one system of beings, to form one entire universe, according to the counsel of his will.;²³

The four preceding roles of Creator, Author, Supporter, and Preserver highlight the active care as well as the superintendence that is required to bring the world into being and to maintain its established order. Here the Son is, to use Wesley's own words, "the Lord and Disposer of the whole creation, and every part of it."²⁴ So significant is this rule that Wesley refers to the Son as nothing less than the "*Governor* of all things"²⁵ that are or ever were created, a role that includes, like the Father's, a "providential government over the children of men."²⁶ In fact, the same three circles of providence that are evident in the sermon "On Divine Providence," with respect to the work of God/Father, are also present in this earlier "christological" sermon, "Spiritual Worship."²⁷ Providential intent and care, then, is very much a part of the Son's work as well.

Beyond this, Wesley ascribes a divine title to the Son that is indicative of the teleological thrust, the goal orientation, of much of his own theology as well. Accordingly, he maintains that the Son as the true God is "the *End* of all things, according to that solemn declaration of the Apostle: 'Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things'—*of him* as the Creator, *through him* as the Sustainer and Preserver; and *to him* as the ultimate End of all."²⁸ Simply put, from the

origins of creation to the consummation of all things, the Son of God is the goal, the perfection in love and being, to which human beings are directed.

And finally, the Son of God is "the *Redeemer* of all the children of men."²⁹ Jesus Christ as the very Word of God saves humanity from the guilt and power and ultimately from the being of sin and thereby ushers in a freedom unexcelled and unequalled: the freedom to love God and neighbor. This role of the Redeemer whereby both forgiveness and new life are mediated to the faithful is perhaps the best known and, in some people's minds at least, the only principal role for the Son of God. In fact, according to some current theological trends, the division of labor, so to speak, among persons of the Christian Godhead is sometimes divided along these lines: the Father is the *Creator*, the Son is the *Redeemer*, and the Holy Spirit is the *Sanctifier*. However, it should be evident by now that such views do not adequately represent Wesley's own Christology (or his doctrines of God and the Holy Spirit for that matter). That is, according to Wesley, the Son of God is suitably and accurately described in all the following ways: as the Redeemer, of course, but also as the Creator, Author, Sustainer, Preserver, Governor, and End. No single function, in other words, is exclusive to the Father—or to the Son or to the Holy Spirit. Instead, what one finds in Wesley's theology is an interpenetration of roles. For its part, the early church employed the language of *perichoresis* to express the idea that the three persons of Father, Son, and Spirit mutually inhere in one another and indeed are what they are precisely in *relation* to one another. With this being-in-one-another, a genuine permeation without confusion, it is not surprising to learn of an interpenetration of roles as well. Wesley understood and valued such ancient wisdom.

The Human Nature

Because a God of holy love is other directed, expressive in outward orientation, and purposive in making communion, the Word of God comes forth to enter into human existence and thereby bring about the very conditions necessary for redemption, properly speaking. For Wesley, the Word becoming flesh—this descending movement from the form of God to a more humble human form (that of a servant)—bespeaks of the divine love in a remarkable way: "What manner of love is this wherewith the only-begotten Son of God hath loved us! So as to 'empty himself,' as far as possible, of his eternal Godhead! As to divest himself of that glory which he had with the Father before the world began! As to 'take upon him the form of a servant.' "³⁰

Viewed from another perspective, this kenotic descending of the Word from a glorious form to a humble one, becoming incarnate as a genuine human being, bridging the distance, at least in some sense, between God and humanity, all of this demonstrates a basic tension in Christian theology, as Wesley understood it, between transcendence on the one hand and immanence on the other. In other words, the incarnation of the Word in human form not only brings an accompanying *illumination* ("This was the true light, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world"³¹ [John 1:9]) but also ably demonstrates that in the distinct Christian understanding of revelation the Most High does not simply remain in the starry heavens, so to speak, apart, transcendently removed and coldly distant. On the contrary, God *comes*. The Holy One as a result of this gracious movement must now be known as *Immanuel*, God with us. For Wesley, then, the evoking, calling God is also the coming God— each attribute directed toward fellowship and communion.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:26-28)

The descent of the Word of God was manifested in lowly circumstances and

was tied *in particular* to the story of an obscure young Jewish woman and her husband in first-century Israel. The poor and humble Mary conceived, Wesley taught, not by Joseph but by "the power of the Highest overshadowing her."³² Observe in this context, the virgin birth and divine agency are strongly associated, the one informing the other. In other words, precisely because Mary conceived, as Wesley put it, in a unique way "by the singular operation of the Holy Ghost,"³³ this begetting, therefore, excluded the role normally filled by a human father. For Wesley, then, the doctrine of the virgin birth does not represent a later addition, suggested by the sexual ethic of the emerging church, informed as it was by Hellenistic elements. Rather, it illuminates the divine agency in this birth; in other words, it is no one less than the Holy Spirit who brings about this distinct conception.

Traditional in many respects, Wesley followed his own Anglican Church (and in a way similar to Rome) by maintaining the perpetual virginity of Mary. Thus, even after the birth of Christ, Mary, in Wesley's estimation, "continued a pure and unspotted virgin."³⁴ Such an assertion resulted in some odd exegesis by Wesley, especially when he grappled with passages from the *New Testament* that suggested otherwise. One difficulty, in particular, concerned the proper interpretation of Matthew 13:55-56: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us?" However, in order to extricate himself from this exegetical quandary, Wesley resuscitated a teaching that went back as far as Jerome and that had worked its way into some of the corridors of the Church of England itself. Concerning this verse, Wesley wrote: "*His brethren*—Our kins men. They were the sons of Mary, sister to the virgin, and wife of Cleophas or Alpheus."³⁵ In other words, this Mary was not his mother, but his aunt; James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas were not his brothers, but his cousins! This interpretive move, which some scholars even today consider evasive, is reiterated in Wesley's commentary on Matthew 12:46 and John 7:03 and stands as an oddity in his otherwise very Protestant theology.³⁶

Though Wesley affirmed that Christ was born of a virgin, he nevertheless apparently balked at too close an identification with Mary and "her substance." Observe the language of Article II of the *Thirty-nine Articles* that Wesley had read so many times during his career:

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, *and* of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, *of her substance*: so that two

whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided.³⁷

The problem, however, is that when Wesley reproduced this article in his own *Methodist Articles* that appeared in the *Sunday Service* for American Methodist consumption, he omitted the phrase "of her substance," with respect to Mary, though he kept similar language in terms of the Father. Thus, Wesley affirmed that Christ was consubstantial with God, "of one substance with the Father," but he omitted the parallel affirmation with respect to humanity. Apparently he was unwilling to affirm, for whatever reason, that Christ was of one substance with Mary, though he did maintain, in reproducing this article, "that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man."³⁸

Other troubling evidence emerges as Wesley reproduced the epistles of Ignatius for his *Christian Library*, for in doing so he left out any passages that referred to Jesus as being born "of the race of David according to the flesh."³⁹ A similar tendency can be found in Wesley's reluctance to employ what he called "fondling expressions" with respect to Christ, though he admitted that this language was often found in the writings of such gifted spiritual writers as Thomas à Kempis.⁴⁰ More to the point, Wesley especially took exception to the phrases "Dear Lord" and "Dear Savior," though he noted that even his brother Charles had succumbed to this level of familiarity and "used the same in many of his hymns."⁴¹

Interesting enough, Wesley's reasoned objections to the use of fondling expressions may also provide some insight into his apparent reluctance to stress the human nature of Christ too strongly. For one thing, he believed that the employment of such common, sentimental language constitutes "knowing Christ after the flesh."⁴² Not only does it abate "that tender reverence due to the Lord their Governor,"⁴³ but it also "insensibly damps 'that speechless awe, which dares not move.' "⁴⁴ In other words, this language fails to be mindful of the *divinity* of Christ in a way that Wesley thought proper. "The sum of all," Wesley exclaims, "is, We are to 'honour the Son even as we honour the Father.' "⁴⁵ In this reckoning, "the great Lord of heaven and earth"⁴⁶ deserves nothing less.

Monophysitism: The view that Christ had only one nature (*monos*, "single," *physis*, "nature"). This

teaching, which invariably diminishes the human nature of Christ, can be found in the polemic of Cyril of Alexandria against Nestorius.

So then, despite some of the material that appears to downplay the human nature of Christ in Wesley's writings, and thereby moves in a direction of *monophysitism*, we nevertheless must conclude that Wesley's Christology is in line with orthodoxy, with the council of Chalcedon in particular⁴⁷ (which offered the formula two natures in one person), even if there was admittedly some hesitancy on Wesley's part in his *genuine* affirmation of the human nature of Christ. Though Wesley ever took the divine nature seriously (as well as its implications for Christian life and worship), "It is too much to say," Deschner wrote, "that Wesley's is a docetic Christology."⁴⁸ For Wesley, Christ is truly both God and human, though he tended, out of respect and honor, to emphasize the former.

The Work of Christ

Despite the care that Wesley took in his Christology, the possibility remained that some of those to whom he preached would know Christ simply after the flesh, that is, as one judged in an all-too-human way. Who is Jesus of Nazareth, this poor ancient Jew, that we should take note of him? What sets him apart from all others? And how can Jesus be the revelation of the eternal God, the Holy One of Israel, in love, mercy, and holiness, such that he is, after all, the Christ? Answers to these pointed questions can be found in Wesley's teaching with respect to the work of Jesus of Nazareth, specifically in terms of his roles as a prophet, priest, and king. That is, the person of Jesus is revealed through thought-provoking actions; his identity is unveiled through gracious and powerful deeds.

Prophet

In his commentary on Matthew 1:16, Wesley points out that the word "Christ" in Greek, and "Messiah" in Hebrew—ascriptions that the church applied to Jesus in light of his life and ministry—signify an anointed one and "imply the prophetic, priestly and royal characters."⁴⁹ In terms of this first role, that of prophet, Wesley repeatedly stressed that the Word became incarnate in Christ in order to "enlighten our minds"⁵⁰ and to reveal "the whole will of God."⁵¹ As such, Christ is "the great Lawgiver" and to reveal "the whole will of God."⁵² and "has not introduced a new religion into the world, but the same which was from the beginning,"⁵³ when the morning stars sang for the glory of God.

The Three Offices of Christ:

Prophet

Priest

King

This affirmation of Christ as a lawgiver likely came as a surprise to some of the Protestants of Wesley's own age simply because several had grown accustomed to a law and gospel dialectic in which the seriousness and prescriptive power of the law was often muted in the name of grace or what some termed gospel "liberty." Wesley always considered such theological judgments ill informed and broadly mistaken since they entailed putting aside the *express will of God* in the name of grace. For Wesley, a law and grace tension does *not* inform the distinction between the old covenant and the new, such that the gospel is then set in tension, or in the worst instances, actually against the Decalogue of Moses. On the contrary, both the old and the new covenants are gracious according to Wesley. Therefore, the designation "a covenant of works," so often wrongly applied to the Old Testament itself by zealous Protestants, only characterized Adam and Eve in their innocence. To illustrate, Wesley writes "But it is the covenant of *grace* which God through Christ hath established with men in all ages (as well before, and under the Jewish dispensation, as since God was manifest in the flesh), which St. Paul here opposes to the covenant of *works*, made with Adam while in paradise."⁵⁴

In a real sense, Christ as the Messiah of Israel is the nexus, the continuity between the covenants, in particular the moral law of the Old Testament, on the one hand, and that of the New Testament, on the other. Again for Wesley the Son

of God is the great Author of the law⁵⁵ as well as the "giver of the Decalogue to Moses."⁵⁶ In his *NT Notes* on Acts 7:35, for example, he elaborates: "It was therefore the Son of God who delivered the law to Moses, under the character of Jehovah, and who is here spoken of as the angel of the covenant, in respect of his mediatorial office."⁵⁷ In fact, so strongly does Wesley associate the moral law with Christ that the same christological predicates that mark the relation of the Son to the Father are, interestingly enough, applied to the moral law as well. In his sermon "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," for example, Wesley observes: "It is the heart of God disclosed to man. Yea, in some sense, we may apply to this law what the Apostle says of his Son—it is [*apaugasma tes doxes, kai karakter tes upostaseos autos*], 'the streaming forth' or outbeaming 'of his glory, the express image of his person.' "⁵⁸ Elsewhere in this same sermon, Wesley describes the moral law as "the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High."⁵⁹

The preceding descriptions of the moral law that reverberate with the christological language of Colossians, as Albert Outler correctly pointed out,⁶⁰ caused Deschner in his own age to query: "Is Christ the onlybegotten of the Father?"⁶¹ Though the characteristics of Christ and the moral law in these and similar contexts are indeed remarkably alike, making explicit Wesley's high valuation of the moral law, nevertheless he made a significant distinction between the *being* of Christ as the eternally begotten Son of God and the *form* of the moral law that had its rise at the *beginning of time* since it was rooted in a *created* order.⁶² Again, the moral law is divine virtue and wisdom assuming a visible *form*. To be sure, Wesley did not deny that such virtue and wisdom are the "original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity."⁶³ Rather, he maintained that *as law*, a complete model of truth intelligible both to angelic and human beings, these eternal elements took a particular *form* in time such that the moral law, which contained them, suitably expressed "the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created."⁶⁴

Moreover, as Deschner noted, since there is no point in the elaborate history of the law "where Wesley has not attempted to provide an explicit Christological foundation,"⁶⁵ then when Christ reveals the original nature and relations of things, as in the Sermon on the Mount, "He is only revealing what He Himself has created."⁶⁶ The role of Christ as a prophet, then, is not only to declare the moral law as the explicit will of the *Creator*, especially in terms of the fitness of

relations, but also to illuminate that same law, in its various relations, as an equal expression of the will of the *Governor* who has ordered things so that through faith and obedience believers will be led to the highest ends of that eternal goodwill, namely, to the love and holiness of God. Again, Christ as a prophet is a teacher of *both* the law *and* the gospel, a conjunction that not only describes so much of Western Protestant theology, but, in Wesley's case, also represents a wonderful particularization of his even larger conjunction of holiness and love.

Priest

Because Wesley took human sin so seriously, as the preceding chapter has already argued, he taught that the unbelief, alienation, and pride left in the wake of sin could not be overcome simply by human effort or design. Sinful human beings, in other words, cannot heal the problem caused by sin simply because they themselves are the problem. This means, of course, that for Wesley, as for other orthodox believers, the first elements of redemption do not entail *any direct access* to God. Due to the effects of sin in their perverting, deceiving, and stupefying powers, a proper relationship with the Most High can only be reestablished through the work of a Mediator. To be sure, so vital is the work of the One who bridges the relationship between God and humanity that Wesley claimed "they who have not him, through the one Mediator, have no God."⁶⁷ Again, "we could not rejoice that there is a God," Wesley observed, "were there not a mediator also; one who stands between God and men, to reconcile man to God, and to transact the whole affair of our salvation."⁶⁸

This priestly role of Christ that mediates the divine/human relationship is unique since it is a reflection of his distinct person and nature. No being, in other words, who falls short of the divine essence can accomplish this priestly work. "This excludes all other mediators, as saints and angels," Wesley exclaimed, "whom the Papists set up and idolatrously worship as such; just as the heathens of old set up many mediators."⁶⁹ Christ in his person as truly divine and really human is the second Adam, the representative of humanity, and for Wesley the Anglican Arminian, "the Mediator of all."⁷⁰

Atonement

To atone for sin is part of what the priestly Mediator does through his own sacrifice. This work, according to Wesley, is flush with the images of the suffering servant of Isaiah that find their fulfillment, their highest expression, at Calvary. Indeed, from the vantage point of the New Testament authors, the sacrificial death of Christ is so crucial that much of the material of the Gospels is taken up with the last twenty-four hours of Jesus' life.

The cross, the emblem of the Christian faith, was bloody, dirty, and filled with shame, an offense and stumbling block for both Jew and Greek alike. In Wesley's own eighteenth-century context, Lord Huntingdon, on the one hand, saw little need for the atonement or for a cross for that matter. In its place, he reckoned that "the scriptural scheme of morality"⁷¹ was quite enough. For Wesley, on the other hand, the atonement, as with his doctrine of original sin, was "properly the distinguishing point between Deism and Christianity."⁷² He could see, as Outler noted, "that the 'philosophers' were, in fact, recasting the historic *ordo salutis* and proclaiming a gospel of salvation attainable by human effort."⁷³ And late in his career, no doubt frustrated with this ongoing misunderstanding, Wesley declared, "Nothing in the Christian system is of greater consequence than the doctrine of Atonement."⁷⁴ In fact, in 1782, he cautioned his preachers that their "main and constant business [was] to 'preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'" ⁷⁵

A number of theories of the atonement have surfaced throughout the rich history of the church, some of which undoubtedly helped inform Wesley's own teaching. Several early church fathers—for example, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria among them—developed metaphors that suggested Christ died as a ransom in order to free humanity from the grasp of the devil. Adding to this metaphor, Origen specifically maintained that the ransom offered by Christ was paid not to God but to the devil, a notion that proved troubling for later theologians who argued quite simply that the devil had no rights and therefore was owed nothing.

Though Wesley did not take matters so far as Origen, he nevertheless clearly taught that Christ offered a ransom by his death. Developing the biblical teaching of the term (with respect to *lyvtron* and its cognates), Wesley focused not on the issue of to whom a ransom was paid; rather, he underscored the

universality of this distinct work as evident in his comments on 1 Timothy 2:6 in which he once again noted the sufficiency of Christ's death, "Even *for as many souls* as needed such a ransom."⁷⁶ Not surprising, then, as Wesley contended with George Whitefield early on in his career, he declared in his sermon "Free Grace," produced in 1739, that Christ " 'gave himself a ransom for all'; 'He tasted death for *every* man.' "⁷⁷ Moreover, when Wesley appealed to Old Testament materials to articulate his view, he drew upon the imagery of Abraham about to sacrifice his son, Isaac, and thereby affirmed that God took the initiative and provided the great sacrifice of atonement, "when none in heaven or earth could have found a lamb for that burnt-offering."⁷⁸

A theory of the atonement that illuminates Wesley's many reflections on the work of Christ—perhaps even more than a ransom view—devolves upon the basic notion of satisfaction in which the ideas not only of compensation but also of rendering some form of recompense specifically to the justice of God are also developed. Appealing to the doctrinal formulations of his own church, especially as reflected in *The Book of Common Prayer*, Wesley writes in his sermon "God's Love to Fallen Man," "But we could not have loved him as 'bearing our sins in his own body on the tree,' and 'by that one oblation of himself once offered making a full oblation, sacrifice, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.' "⁷⁹ Compare this with the language of Wesley's *Sunday Service*, which followed *The Book of Common Prayer* in considerable detail:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by his oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.⁸⁰

It should be evident by now that Wesley's thought in this context, as he cites the Anglican material, is reminiscent of that of Anselm in his eleventh-century classic *Cur Deus Homo*.⁸¹ The heart of the Archbishop of Canterbury's medieval satisfaction theory can be summarized as follows:

1. Humanity ought to make satisfaction for sin but cannot. (Obligation, but inability.)
2. God can make satisfaction for sin, but ought not. (Ability, but no obligation.)
Therefore
3. Only the God/Human both can and ought to make satisfaction for sin.(Ability and obligation.)⁸²

The first premise above was explored in considerable detail in Wesley's

writings. Indeed, he affirmed, in a way similar to Anselm, that sinful human beings are powerless to atone for the least of their sins; they are utterly incapable of "appeasing the wrath of God."⁸³ Moreover, Wesley explained in his writings why even perfect obedience henceforth, if that were even a possibility, would not undo or make satisfaction for any *past* sins in the least—since all obedience is "owed" to a God of holy love anyway. In his sermon "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the First," Wesley reasons as follows:

How shall he pay him that he oweth? Were he from this moment to perform the most perfect obedience to every command of God, this would make no amends for a single sin, for any one act of past disobedience: seeing he owes God all the service he is able to perform from this moment to all eternity.⁸⁴

Wesley continued in this Anselmic vein in a letter to William Law in 1756 in which he queried: "Is not man here represented as having contracted a debt with God which he cannot pay? and God as having, nevertheless, a right to insist upon the payment of it?"⁸⁵ This and other kinds of language have led Lindstrom to the conclusion that "orthodox satisfaction would seem to be the dominant conception in [Wesley's] view of atonement. . . . [T]he legal order and the judicial system emerge as the governing principle."⁸⁶ Likewise, Deschner maintains that "satisfaction, not victory, is emphasized when Wesley thinks of the atone ment."⁸⁷

While it is clear that the notion of satisfaction is integral to Wesley's understanding of the atoning work of Christ, it is less clear, at least at this point, just how that satisfaction is to be understood. In other words, in what way does Christ make compensation and satisfy the justice of God? Is it by illuminating sinful humanity through his teaching, by displaying a love that could only be divine, by offering his life in sacrifice, or by being a substitute for humanity, standing in its place or perhaps even by suffering a penalty that sinful humanity should have rightly borne? All of these are possibilities. However, we can come closer to Wesley's actual seasoned judgment in this area by drawing an important distinction between the satisfaction view of Anselm and that of Wesley, for the former held that the sacrifice of Christ secured merit that was then imputed to the guilty, while the latter by and large followed the Protestant Reformers and maintained that satisfaction is best considered in terms of penal substitution.⁸⁸ In other words, for Wesley, Christ makes compensation and satisfies the justice of God precisely by standing in the place of sinful humanity, by being reckoned among its numbers, and in the end by bearing the penalty, the very wages of sin. In his treatise *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, Wesley

elaborates:

Our sins were the procuring cause of all his sufferings. His sufferings were the *penal effects* of our sins. "The chastisement of our peace," the punishment necessary to procure it, "was" laid "on him," freely submitting thereto: "And by his stripes" (a part of his sufferings again put for the whole) "we are healed"; pardon, sanctification, and final salvation, are all purchased and bestowed upon us. Every chastisement is for some fault. That laid on Christ was not for his own, but ours; and was needful to reconcile an offended Lawgiver, and offending guilty creatures, to each other. So "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all"; that is, the punishment due to our iniquity.⁸⁹

In light of this teaching, it is not surprising to learn that a broad agreement exists in the secondary literature that Wesley's satisfaction view of the atonement is best comprehended in terms of penal substitution. Langford, for example, noted that "from John Wesley to Richard Watson, the theme of Jesus' substitutionary death as a means of satisfying the justice of God was central in Methodist theology, as it was in the Reformation theology of that period."⁹⁰ In addition, Deschner reminded the broader community that "in the Wesleyan atonement Christ performs a penal substitution."⁹¹ And Williams, for his part, pointed out that "the central point of penal substitutionary theory was of great importance for Wesley,"⁹² and Lindstrom argued much the same.⁹³ And though point, just how that satisfaction is to be understood. In other words, in what way does Christ make compensation and satisfy the justice of God? Is it by illuminating sinful humanity through his teaching, by displaying a love that could only be divine, by offering his life in sacrifice, or by being a substitute for humanity, standing in its place or perhaps even by suffering a penalty that sinful humanity should have rightly borne? All of these are possibilities. However, we can come closer to Wesley's actual seasoned judgment in this area by drawing an important distinction between the satisfaction view of Anselm and that of Wesley, for the former held that the sacrifice of Christ secured *merit* that was then imputed to the guilty, while the latter by and large followed the Protestant Reformers and maintained that satisfaction is best considered in terms of penal substitution.⁸⁸ In other words, for Wesley, Christ makes compensation and satisfies the justice of God precisely by standing in the place of sinful humanity, by being reckoned among its numbers, and in the end by bearing the penalty, the very wages of sin. In his treatise *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, Wesley elaborates:

Our sins were the procuring cause of all his sufferings. His sufferings were the *penal effects* of our sins. "The chastisement of our peace," the punishment necessary to procure it, "was" laid "on him," freely submitting thereto: "And by his stripes" (a part of his sufferings again put for the whole) "we are healed"; pardon, sanctification, and final salvation, are all purchased and bestowed upon us. Every chastisement is for some fault. That laid on Christ was not for his own, but ours; and was needful to reconcile an offended Lawgiver, and offending guilty creatures, to each other. So "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all"; that is, the punishment due to our iniquity.⁸⁹

In light of this teaching, it is not surprising to learn that a broad agreement exists in the secondary literature that Wesley's satisfaction view of the atonement is best comprehended in terms of penal substitution. Langford, for example, noted that "from John Wesley to Richard Watson, the theme of Jesus' substitutionary death as a means of satisfying the justice of God was central in Methodist theology, as it was in the Reformation theology of that period."⁹⁰ In addition, Deschner reminded the broader community that "in the Wesleyan atonement Christ performs a penal substitution."⁹¹ And Williams, for his part, pointed out that "the central point of penal substitutionary theory was of great importance for Wesley,"⁹² and Lindstrom argued much the same.⁹³ And though Dunning agrees with these *descriptive* judgments of Wesley's view of the atonement, he nevertheless takes issue with the suitability of a penal substitutionary view in Wesley's overall theology in a way that Lindstrom did not. "The idea that Jesus bears the punishment for man's sins is totally foreign to the New Testament, Dunning expostulates; 'the language it uses is 'suffering,' not 'punishment.' "⁹⁴ And to underscore the point, this Nazarene scholar adds: "It is truly unfortunate that Wesley failed to recognize this and thus introduced an element incongruous with his otherwise largely biblically sound views."⁹⁵

We, however, will make the case that Wesley's promulgation of a penal substitutionary interpretation of the atonement is not only appropriate but also is actually indexical to his overall theology. That is, it brings together the various themes, even tensions, of a conjunctive theology that celebrates both the holiness *and* the love of God in its ongoing themes of justice, mercy, and love. To make this explicit, we will explore Wesley's sophisticated and well-nuanced understanding of the atonement in terms of objective elements (the God-ward relation) and subjective ones (the human-ward relation) that were both factored into his overall conception. Furthermore, we will develop these elements against the backdrop of a differentiation of graces (initiating, receiving, and responding)

that offer important clues as to how Wesley's estimate of the atonement is best understood.

Objective Elements

The objective aspects of Wesley's penal substitutionary view are concerned with the work that God does *for us* in the face of human inability to make atonement that both Anselm and Wesley rightly recognized. As such, the atoning work of God in Christ represents the sovereign action of the Most High with the result that beyond the roles of Creator and Governor, the Holy One is now known as a *Redeemer* as well. This *initiating* grace and labor, in the face of human impotence, is concerned with bringing about a proper *relation* to God once more, with what from the divine point of view (that takes holiness, justice, and the moral law seriously) is necessary in order to effectuate reconciliation, literally at-onement. Indeed, since Christ alone due to his unique person and being *mediates* the divine/human relationship, then both participants are addressed, so to speak. From God's side, "the just wrath of God puts ⁹⁶ And Emil Brunner, whose view on this score is remarkably similar to that of Wesley, contended that "owing to Sin, man's situation in relation to God is dangerous, sinister, and disastrous."⁹⁷ Furthermore, Williams linked the objective elements of the atonement specifically to the wrath of God and argued: "Wesley insisted that in the Atonement something 'objective' took place. . . . The satisfaction of God's wrath by Christ's death is the only basis for the pardon of our sins."⁹⁸

Though some modern assessments of Wesley's theology may have difficulty acknowledging penal substitution in general or the wrath of God in particular, clearly Wesley did not have this problem. In terms of the first issue of penalty, Wesley consistently viewed the death of Christ as bearing the punishment rightly due the rebellious sinner. Drawing the relation between the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and Christ, Wesley reveals that at Calvary, the lamb of God bore "those punishments by which our peace, our reconciliation to God, was to be purchased."⁹⁹ And elsewhere in his treatise *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, Wesley declares that "His sufferings were the penal effects of our sins. 'The chastisement of our peace.'"¹⁰⁰ And though Wesley contends in his commentary on Isaiah that human sins were the "deserving cause" of Christ's burden, he nevertheless argues, in a way often rejected by his contemporaries, that "God was the 'principal cause' of all his sufferings."¹⁰¹ As the apostle Paul put it, "He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In terms of the second issue of wrath, the term itself occurred, remarkably enough, over three hundred times in Wesley's writings. Even more surprising for those who have been schooled on the notion that the love of God excludes all mention of wrath, Wesley actually chronicled the rise, identity, and very purpose of Methodism in terms of it. Thus, in 1743, for example, he wrote:

In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to me in London who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to *flee from the wrath to come*, which they saw continually hanging over their heads.¹⁰²

Again, for Wesley, "nothing is more frequently or more expressly declared in Scripture than God's anger at sin and His punishing it both temporally and eternally."¹⁰³

Deschner summarized these relational elements that bespeak of the integrity of the divine/human correlation in his pithy observation that wrath, for Wesley, is "the legal, just, holy and good answer of God to willful sin."¹⁰⁴ It is *legal* in the sense that it takes God's will, as expressed in the moral law, that copy of the divine mind, fully into account. It is *just* in that it represents an ongoing, determined opposition to evil, not countenancing it in the least. Indeed, Wesley pointed out that "Whoever . . . denies God to be capable of wrath or anger acts consistently in denying His justice also."¹⁰⁵ As Lindstrom observed: "[God's] wrath bears the same relation to His justice as His love to His mercy."¹⁰⁶ In other words, wrath must be understood in terms of the holiness of God. Indeed, it is the very purity and beauty of that holiness, its awe-evoking integrity and power, that creates a fiery distance, even dread, in the sinner. Thus, a holy God is present to sinful human beings precisely as resistance, and as Brunner observed, "The Bible calls this 'resistance' the Wrath of God."¹⁰⁷ And finally, it is *good* in that wrath marks the response of God to the stubborn ongoing power of evil. This truth, however, is turned on its head when the love of God is separated from the holiness of God. When this is done (and it can happen for all sorts of reasons), then wrath will inevitably be seen as something utterly "evil," as actually alien to the divine purpose and love. But as noted earlier, such a "love," divorced from holiness, will emerge as sentimental, imaginary (a species of wishful thinking), and cheap, for it oddly enough *tolerates* evil, by making ongoing allowances for it, precisely in the name of love! Mincing no words, Wesley called those ministers who brought such views into the classroom and

pulpit "promise-mongers."¹⁰⁸ In his "Thoughts Concerning Gospel Ministers," for example, he cautions:

Not every one who deals in the promises only, without ever showing the terrors of the law; that slides over "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness," and endeavours to heal those that never were wounded. These promise-mongers are no Gospel Ministers.¹⁰⁹

The first difficulty, then as now, in comprehending the wrath of God aright and in seeing it as none other than an appropriate expression of *holy* love, concerns the whole matter of anger. Wesley, however, did not mistake divine anger for human wrath, as is so often done in some gross anthropomorphic moves. The anger of humanity, for instance, is often wild, animated, and vengeful—consumed in hateful, vindictive passions that are anything but holy. God's anger, however, is not like this. Consequently, Wesley warned his readers that the wrath of the Most High must never be confused with human anger or, more important, conceived apart from God's love—a love that yet remains "his darling, his reigning at tribute."¹¹⁰ In a letter to Mary Bishop in 1778, Wesley offers a number of cautions while at the same time he affirms the divine anger. He explains:

But it is certain, had God never been angry, He could never have been reconciled. So that, in affirming this, Mr. Law strikes at the very root of the Atonement, and finds a very short method of converting Deists. Although, therefore, I do not term God, as Mr. Law supposes, "a wrathful Being," which conveys a wrong idea; yet I firmly believe He was angry with all mankind, and that He was reconciled to them by the death of His Son. And I know He was angry with me till I believed in the Son of His love; and yet this is no impeachment to His mercy, that He is just as well as merciful.¹¹¹

For Wesley, then, divine wrath (when compared to that of humans) must be conceived "only in an analogical sense."¹¹²

The second difficulty with divine wrath, which perhaps is far more indicative of a twenty-first-century Western setting than Wesley's own setting, has to do with some of the consequences of reigning therapeutic models of salvation that view sinners principally as *victims*. So understood, sinners have caught the disease of sin, albeit with some appreciation of responsibility for having done so, and they languish in a sickbed as the Great Physician *nurtures* them on to increasing *degrees* of health and wholeness. And though Wesley's doctrine of salvation can indeed be explained, *in part*, by appeal to therapeutic models, he never viewed sinners merely or even largely as victims but also as *perpetrators*

—as those who not only actively fed their own inbred sinful inclination to depart from the living God, but also were quite energetic in their opposition, even rebellion, against a God of holy love. And as the previous chapter has already pointed out, not even children are excused. "Children themselves," Wesley contends, "are not innocent before God. They suffer; therefore, they deserve to suffer."¹¹³

Since Wesley himself had little difficulty in acknowledging the wrath of God, but understood it in light of divine holy love in its unswerving and resolute opposition to evil, he naturally did not balk at the translation of *hilasmos* (1 John 2:2) as propitiation rather than as expiation, a preference that highlighted viewing the work of Christ, to use Wesley's own words, as "the atoning sacrifice by which the wrath of God is *appeased*."¹¹⁴ Developing the language of the Anglican *Thirty-nine Articles* ("The Offering of Christ once made is *that* perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world . . ."; Article XXXI), Wesley reaches back, once again, to Old Testament images and makes the connection between Christ, on the one hand, and the mercy-seat of the ark of the covenant, on the other, which, as a propitiatory covering, was "a type of Christ the great *propitiation*."¹¹⁵ Again, by Jesus Christ, as "the great propitiation there is reconciliation made. . . . he interposeth between us and God's displeasure, and through him we become entitled to God's favor."¹¹⁶ Indeed, so crucial was the notion of propitiation to Wesley's overall view of the atonement that he observed: "But if, as some teach, God never was offended, there was no need of this propitiation. And, if so, Christ died in vain."¹¹⁷

A further objection to Wesley's penal substitutionary view is expressed in the claim that the logic of this interpretation necessarily demands either universalism, on the one hand, or unconditional election, on the other hand.¹¹⁸ However, since only the God/human can atone for sins, and since he has also made a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,"¹¹⁹ as noted earlier, then the notion of universality, properly understood, is indeed a part of Wesley's view when the objective aspects are considered. But observe that the atoning work of Christ is not the *formal* cause of justification (the forgiveness of those sins that are past) but the *meritorious* cause; that is, the atonement is the basis upon which the offer of forgiveness is made to *all*. Drawing an important distinction that illuminates Wesley's teaching in contradistinction to a Calvinist view, Outler described the formal cause in

terms of a "correlated view of predestination and irresistible grace," and he depicted the meritorious cause as one that "allowed for prevenience, free will, and 'universal redemption.'" ¹²⁰ In other words, the atoning work of Christ for Wesley represents the universal *basis* upon which the forgiveness of sins is offered to *all*. This is universalism in the sense that not all are necessarily redeemed but that all *may* be redeemed. That is, full provision has *already* been made for the forgiveness of sins of all people. In this sense, universality marks

Wesley's penal substitutionary view.

This ample provision for the need of all human beings through the atoning work of the Mediator highlights *initiating* or *prevenient* grace broadly understood. Faced with the powerlessness of sinful humanity to atone for even the least of sins, God acts in freedom and sovereignty and reconciles the world through the sacrifice of the Mediator, the God/human, in lavish and free grace. From the God-ward side of the relation, what we have called the objective elements, atonement has *already* been accomplished. As Jesus uttered from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Christ's sacrifice, to use the words of the Anglican Articles once more, is "that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual."¹²¹ Wesley the Arminian understood that kind of perfection as well. Therefore, "any theory of atonement," as Taylor notes, "falls short that fails to see it as *extensive* (to all . . .) and as *intensive* (for all sin)."¹²²

Subjective Elements

Though God has already acted in Jesus Christ even before sinners are aware of it, the atonement, the reconciliation of God and humanity from the humanward side in its subjective heart-changing effects, would not take place until such benefits are *received*. That is, initiating grace must be accompanied by receiving grace. And the distinction between these two gifts from God can be illustrated by Wesley's dialog with August Spangenberg in Georgia. In February 1736, for example, the Moravian leader asked quite pointedly: "Do you know Jesus Christ?" To which Wesley replied, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." Undeterred, Spangenberg pressed his case: "True . . . but do you know he has saved *you*?"¹²³

It is this transition from knowing Christ as the Savior of the world to knowing that he has saved *you* in particular (Luther's *pro me*) that illuminates the difference, at least in some sense, between initiating grace (which is the work of God and the Mediator *alone*) and receiving grace (which is, of course, a divine work but also one that involves human freedom [graciously restored] and acceptance in that such grace must be embraced). Again, this transition from the objective to subjective elements in Wesley's view of the atonement ultimately issues in the justification (and assurance) of sinners, who having no righteousness of their own, must receive this boon, *almost* in a passive way, as the sheer utter gift that it actually is. So then, even here the priority is, once again, on divine action, though the integrity of the human personality is respected, and its freedom to receive grace affirmed, aspects that would be repudiated or lost in deterministic understandings of redemption that played out among some of Wesley's Calvinist friends. Wesley explored the ideas behind initiating and receiving graces, divine and human action, by drawing a distinction between freedom and conditions as they pertained to the gifts of God. He observes:

"Can then God give that freely, which he does not give but upon certain terms and conditions?" Doubtless he can; as one may freely give you a sum of money, on condition *you stretch out your hand to receive it*. It is therefore no "contradiction to say, We are justified freely by grace, and yet upon certain terms or conditions."¹²⁴

Consequently, for Wesley, the first movements of salvation, properly

understood, are marked by initiating and receiving graces, which then out of gratitude and thankfulness issue in responding grace. But note that there is no responding without first *receiving*, whether that receiving is understood in a sovereign fashion, as in terms of the irresistibly restored faculties of prevenient grace, or in a fashion that admits of human action, at least in some sense, even if it only entails extending the hand to receive the gift of forgiveness and justification.

But God, according to Wesley, is even more gracious than this, for behind the subjective aspects of the atonement is the divine love that earnestly seeks to bless. The kenotic movement of Christ's incarnational descent to take on the form of a servant finds its fulfillment, its completion, on a blood-spattered cross. In Christ's embrace of rejection and shame, what Wesley describes as "the greatest instance both of humiliation and obedience,"¹²⁵ Christ not only radically identified with the righteous judgment of a holy God upon all sinners, but also displayed a love that was enduring, triumphant, and, in the end, nothing less than divine. "After this demonstration of his love," Wesley asked, "is it possible to doubt any longer of God's tender regard for man, even though he was 'dead in trespasses and sins'?"¹²⁶

Wesley once again underscored the love of God called forth in believers by drawing a relation between Adam and Christ. Had not Adam sinned, Wesley reasons, we could not have loved God the same as if he delivered the Son up for us all.¹²⁷ "We might have loved the Son of God as being 'the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person . . . ,' " he declares; "But we could not have loved him as 'bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.' "¹²⁸ This "happy fault" of Adam and Eve, what some refer to by the Latin phrase *Felix Culpa*, necessitates the coming of Christ and his atoning death, such that a far greater good comes out of this original evil than is otherwise possible. In other words, without the fall, "that amazing instance of the love of God to man [would have] never existed which has in all ages excited the highest joy, and love, and gratitude from his children."¹²⁹ Believers might have loved God as Creator, Preserver, and Governor, but there would have been no place for loving God as the Redeemer. As a consequence of this, believers may attain "more holiness and happiness on earth than it would have been possible for them to attain if Adam had not fallen."¹³⁰

Though Wesley did indeed view the atonement of Christ as having "excited the highest joy and love, and gratitude from his children" as just noted, and though he also stressed some of the subjective aspects of Christ's work, its

human-ward direction so to speak, by illuminating the importance of *receiving* grace efficaciously, nevertheless his view can be distinguished, in some measure, from the moral influence theory of Abelard. For one thing, though this medieval scholar in his *Commentary on Romans* does develop the subjective aspects of the atonement, nevertheless, in this view the love that is engendered is not necessarily rooted in a kenotic descent to the cross in the way that it is for Wesley. Indeed, for Abelard, judging from his appendix to Romans 3:19-26,^{[131](#)} the love of God might have been revealed in other ways, apart from Calvary. In Wesley's reckoning, however, it is precisely at the lowest depths, and in the least likely of places, that the humble, sacrificial love of God paradoxically shines forth. What manner of love is it that takes the place of sinners, bears their judgment, and despises the shame! So understood, love and the cross are not incidentally related but are necessarily so. Together they are a reflection of God's humble, sacrificial holy love.

King

The crucified one, despised and rejected, is revealed by the power of his resurrection as the Son of the living God. In this glorious work, the Most High attests to the sufficiency of atonement "by raising our great Surety from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:17)."¹³² What's more, the resurrection is the seal and proclamation of the second coming unto judgment for "God 'raising Jesus demonstrated hereby, that He was to be the glorious Judge of all (Acts 17:31).'¹³³

Having been obedient unto death, even death on the cross, Christ has inherited a dominion and is more than fit to judge the nations and to rule as *king*, the last of the three offices. Thus, when Wesley explores the first principal role of the kingly office, that is, "as *giving laws* to all whom he has bought with his blood,"¹³⁴ he not only demonstrates that the Savior will rule and have lasting authority, but also reveals that Christ's working with the law is not exhausted in the prophetic office. As a king, the risen One gives laws (the substance of which is none other than his Word) to the redeemed, to those who have been transformed by the gracious *presence* of the divine life.

The second role of the kingly office, "as *restoring* those to the image of God whom he had first reinstated in his favour,"¹³⁵ suggests the first salvific grace of regeneration, properly speaking, and thereby displays the link between the juridical theme of forgiveness and the participatory one of renewal. Consequently, these two themes are not as divorced, certainly not from the atoning work of Christ as their *basis*, as some interpretations would seem to suggest. To be sure, though Wesley did underscore the juridical aspects of the atonement, as noted earlier, he nevertheless had already learned from both the Salzburgers in Georgia and the Moravians in England—who each in their own way represented the rich tradition of German pietism—that death leads not only to forgiveness but also to life, that the juridical and the participatory are both *rooted* at Golgotha.¹³⁶ Thus, in his commentary on 1 Peter 2:24, Wesley discloses that in terms of sin, believers are "wholly delivered both from the guilt and power of it; indeed, without an atonement first made for the guilt, we could never have been delivered from the power."¹³⁷ Simply put, there is no resurrection without crucifixion; no regeneration without a cross; no kingly role without a prior priestly one.

In light of this, Deschner's claim (and others like it) that "Wesley insists we are forgiven in Christ, but not holy in Christ" *in one sense* is not quite accurate, for it not only sharply divides the juridical from the participatory, but also does not fully see the atoning work of Christ as the gracious basis for holiness and renewal, a renewal that, like forgiveness, is and remains a sheer, utter gift. For one thing, Wesley realized that sinners on the threshold of the new birth become holy, at least initially so, only in Christ, having no holiness (as yet) in themselves. Granted, it will be a holiness that is *imparted*, and here we agree with Deschner; but at its very inception, it marks a *qualitative* change in believers who heretofore have had no holiness *in themselves*. That is, genuine imparted holiness must never be understood apart from being *in Christ* by means of the Holy Spirit who is the fount of all holiness. Accordingly, just as sinners must *receive* the forgiveness of sins (justification), having no forgiveness of their own apart from the atoning work of Christ, so, too, must they *receive* the gracious *presence* of the Spirit of Christ in regeneration and life, having no holiness in themselves, properly speaking, apart from this initially sanctifying grace.

Continuing this line of thought, we note that the apostle Paul expressed the connection between regeneration and the cross in Galatians 2:20b, in which he declared: "the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." And Wesley himself drew the link between justification and regeneration, the juridical and the participatory, in his pungent observation, "When does inward sanctification begin? In the moment we are justified. The *seed of every virtue* is then sown in the soul."¹³⁸ Put another way, these virtues, which mark the beginning of holiness, constitute nothing less than a gift to be received, one that is predicated upon the atoning work of Christ, issues in resurrected life, and is strengthened from the kingly role as well. To be sure, the beginning of holiness, as with forgiveness, are best understood not in the context of co-operant grace or of an overarching synergistic model, but in terms of free grace in which not only are divine action and initiative underscored, and rightly appreciated, but also the powerlessness of sinners *either* to forgive themselves *or* to make themselves holy is ever in view. Simply put, for sinners, the source of both forgiveness *and* renewal is beyond themselves. In both instances, they must come with empty hands.

The third role of Christ as king is "*reigning* in all believing hearts until he has 'subdued all things to himself'; until he hath utterly cast out all sin, and 'brought in everlasting righteousness.'"¹³⁹ Now if we make a distinction between the

beginning of holiness in terms of *receiving grace* and the ongoing *process* of sanctification, in terms of both *receiving* and *responding* grace, then Deschner's earlier observation is both accurate and to the point. That is, for Wesley, though initially sanctifying grace is freely given in conjunction with justification and forgiveness, the active obedience of Christ in fulfilling the law is *not* imputed to the believer. "If there is a fulfillment," as this scholar pointed out, it will be "worked in him by the Spirit of Christ."¹⁴⁰ In fact, when Wesley quoted from Cranmer's "Homily on Salvation" in his sermon "The Lord Our Righteousness,"¹⁴¹ all references to Christ fulfilling the law were simply omitted, specifically the following sentence: "He for them fulfilled the law in his life, so that now in him and by him every Christian may be called a fulfiller of the law, forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacked, Christ's [righteousness] hath supplied."¹⁴²

It is clear, then, that Wesley disassociated the fulfillment of the law from atonement and justification and, in the words of Lindström, "attached it instead to sanctification."¹⁴³ And though *responding* grace has a role to play even from the first glimmers of prevenient grace, it nevertheless comes to prominence in this context of initially sanctifying grace, the proper beginning of the Christian life, simply because the response of the saints is informed for the first time by a love *imparted* in their hearts that is both holy and triumphant. In other words, the victory motif, for Wesley, is not so much associated with Christ's priestly work, that is, with what he does for us (justification), as it is with his kingly work, what he does in us as a Savior and Sanctifier (sanctification).¹⁴⁴ "We want Christ in his royal character to reign in our hearts, and subdue all things to himself . . ."¹⁴⁵ Wesley exclaims; "Hereby we are brought to 'magnify him,' indeed, to 'give him all the glory of his grace,' to 'make him a whole Christ, an entire Saviour,' and truly to 'set the crown upon his head.' "¹⁴⁶

Such a view of Christ's regal role not only affords a significant and ongoing role for the moral law in the life of believers, especially in terms of its prescriptive and illuminating power, but also sees the victory motif of conquering sin, death, hell, and Satan as playing out not simply at the cross,¹⁴⁷ but also in the ongoing transformation of human hearts in the context of the church, as Christ comes, judges, and then finally reigns without a rival. So important is this sanctifying work in believing hearts, in which grace is underscored and in which Christ holds sway, that Wesley envisions no eschatological fulfillment apart from it. In other words, it is precisely as Christ

subdues all things to himself and utterly casts out all sin that everlasting righteousness is brought in—a righteousness that is not only the desire of the church but also the very perfection of the kingly role.

Today and Tomorrow: The Christ of the Qur'an

Islam today not only is a major world religion with well over a billion adherents, stretching from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, but also is second in numbers only to Christianity. Contrary to popular misconceptions, this ranking is likely to continue well into the twenty-first century, and, according to one estimate, by 2050, "there should still be about three Christians for every two Muslims worldwide."^{[148](#)}

The historic figure Muhammad as well as the revelation he received, which constitutes the Qur'an, are both integral to understanding this major faith that has proved attractive to so many. Disturbed with the confusing array of deities in seventh-century Arabia, Muhammad, later known simply as the prophet, questioned why his people did not worship the One true God and why no prophet had been sent to them. The Jews had Moses and the Torah, and the Christians had Jesus and the Gospels, but what of the Arabs?

It is difficult to assess what knowledge Muhammad and his followers had of the Gospels since they were unavailable in Arabic until the ninth century.^{[149](#)} Moreover, when they finally did appear in translation, the Muslims simply refused to read them, having been taught for centuries that they contained distortions of the original revelation. In fact, according to Islamic belief, the religion of the prophet Muhammad is "the correction and fulfillment of the Jewish and Christian messages, contained in the Old Testament and New Testament."^{[150](#)} However, what the prophet actually knew about Christianity probably came through oral tradition as well as from possible contacts with Monophysites, Nestorians, and Melkites (who were by no means the best representatives) since no organized church was in the area at the time.^{[151](#)}

At any rate, according to Muslim tradition, Muhammad began to receive a revelation from the angel Gabriel in 610—what constitutes the first five verses of sura 96 of the Qur'an.^{[152](#)} After a break of two years or so, the prophet once more began to receive illumination that continued without interruption until his death in 632. Over this period of twenty-two years, the principal book of Islam emerged. Consisting of 114 surahs (chapters) and over 6,000 verses, the chapters of the Qur'an are arranged by their length, with the largest coming first, such that the last sura is simply a few verses. Lacking a kinetic line, on which cues are

offered in terms of time, personality, and place, the Qur'an has been something of a puzzle, literarily speaking, especially for Westerners. Pronouns, for example, arise in the work without any antecedent.¹⁵³ Indeed, the arrangement of the book entails considerable repetition and reads more like a series of unconnected aphorisms than anything else.

From the Muslim perspective, the Qur'an is the very word of God, the final divine revelation. In a way similar to the Christian understanding of the incarnation, Muslims consider their revered book as having descended from on high through the *recitation* of Muhammad, that the Qur'an, in other words, represents "God's intercession in human history."¹⁵⁴ As Foterhingham notes, "It is not so much Muhammad who is to be compared with Jesus, but the Qur'an."¹⁵⁵ To be sure, an entire school of thought in Islamic/Christian studies has emerged which argues that revelation must be compared with revelation, and therefore the Qur'an, not Muhammad, is the true parallel of Christ. Simply put, "the Qur'an is to Muslims what Jesus is to Christians."¹⁵⁶ One reason that is offered for this approach can be seen in Tebbe's observation that the comparison of revelation to revelation, instead of book to book, "assumes an openness to another faith not present in the stages of refutation and confrontation."¹⁵⁷

Another view among scholars, though currently a minority one, is that the Qur'an/Christ parallel is beset with difficulties in two key ways: First, to the outsider (who is neither Christian nor Muslim), it appears that the "Christian doctrine of scripture seems tepid when compared to the lofty claim of a Qur'an *dictated* by God."¹⁵⁸ However, the force of this objection is somewhat blunted by the realization that *some* Christian fundamentalists (would we deny them Christian status?) would indeed argue for divine dictation in a way similar to their Muslim neighbors. The second difficulty, in our estimation, is far more weighty, and it concerns the reductionism that inevitably occurs in a Christ/Qur'an comparison in which the Messiah is conceived as "no *more* than the revelation of God, with the expected outcome of an emphasis on the incarnation at the expense of the atonement."¹⁵⁹

Our present concern, of course, is to assess the Christ of the Qur'an, that is, the Qur'an's implicit and explicit Christology. That is, how does Jesus appear in the pages of this literature so cherished by Muslims? For one thing, in the Qur'an's thousands of verses, the proper name of Jesus (Arabic 'Isa) occurs only twenty-five times,¹⁶⁰ but when the references to him as the Messiah or son of Mary are included, ten other references emerge,¹⁶¹ a number that still does not

constitute very many, given that the name of Jesus appears on virtually every page of the New Testament.¹⁶² Remarkably, the Qur'an has more to say about Mary, his mother, than Jesus himself. In fact, this Islamic work contains more material about Mary than even the New Testament! Nevertheless, Jesus remains an important figure in the Qur'an, and a number of honorific names and titles are employed to describe his witness: son of Mary, *Masih* (Messiah), Spirit from God, *mubarak* (the blessed One), *rasul* (messenger), *'abd* (servant), *nabi* (prophet), and even the title Word of God,¹⁶³ though Muslims clearly do not employ this phrase in the same way that Christians do—as will be evident shortly.

Though the Qur'an is inattentive to the flow and sequencing of salvation history, it nevertheless appeals to a prophetic line in which Jesus finds his place. The second sura, for example, states, "We believe in God and that which is revealed to us; in what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes; to Moses and Jesus and the other prophets by their Lord."¹⁶⁴ In this context, Jesus is simply one prophet among others as the next verse makes explicit: "We make no distinction among any of them, and to God we have surrendered ourselves."¹⁶⁵ To be sure, when a preference among the prophets does appear in the pages of the Qur'an, it is given not to Jesus but to Muhammad. Thus, in this view, the religion that Jesus was sent to establish was that of "Noah, Abraham, Moses and subsequently of Muhammad himself."¹⁶⁶ So understood, Muhammad, not Jesus, is the culmination of the prophetic movement, and the relation of the Qur'an to the New Testament is viewed in a way similar to how Christians understand the relation of the New Testament to the Old Testament. That is, the Qur'an is the completion, the perfection, of revelation as it champions its central maxim: there is no God but God, and Muhammad is his prophet.

And yet for anyone who has ever read the Qur'an in its entirety, one can't help getting the sense that in some way, even from the Muslim vantage point, Jesus is special. To illustrate, not only is the son of Mary a miracle worker, having turned clay moldings into live birds (sura 3:49), a story that likely came out of the Eastern Christian world through the infancy Gospels of James and of Thomas¹⁶⁷ (perhaps communicated orally by wandering tribes), but also Jesus was born in a unique way, that is, of a virgin as the New Testament itself attests.

Granted, Jesus is venerated in the pages of the Qur'an, at least to the extent that Muslim scholars themselves maintain, of being depicted as a prophet, though not the final one; as a miracle worker, though performing no major

miracles; and as having been born of a virgin. However, upon further examination of key passages, serious difficulties begin to emerge in this Christology in terms of what one scholar calls "double distancing."¹⁶⁸ In other words, in the Qur'an, divinity is "removed" from Jesus just as he himself is "removed" from the cross. In terms of this first removal, the Qur'an is replete with verses that specifically deny the divinity of Christ in a way similar to that of Arius and others centuries earlier. "Unbelievers are those who declare: 'God is the Messiah, the son of Mary.'" ¹⁶⁹ And of Allah it is written: "He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. How should He have a son when He had no consort?"¹⁷⁰ And in a passage from the Islamic book that has caused repeated difficulties for Christian/Muslim relations, it argues that "those who say:

The Five Pillars of Islam

- (1) Witnessing to the Oneness of God and the prophetic status of Muhammad (the shahadah)
- (2) Observing prayers five times a day (salat)
- (3) Paying alms (zakah)
- (4) Fasting (siyyam)
- (5) Performing the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca at the appointed time) at least once in a lifetime.

Thomas W. Lippman, *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 6-32.

'The Lord of Mercy has begotten a son,' preach a monstrous falsehood, at which the very heavens might crack, the earth break asunder, and the mountains crumble to dust."¹⁷¹ And again, "God forbid that He Himself should beget a son!"¹⁷² In light of this and other material, the pertinent question must finally be addressed: Does God/Father have a Son or not? The Qur'an, on the one hand, says no; the New Testament, on the other hand, repeatedly says yes. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile these views.

The second removal concerns the denial that Jesus Christ was crucified—an historic event not only well attested in the Gospels, but also one with a reference in Tacitus. However, several centuries later, the Qur'an repudiated this event

(that receives the lion's share of attention in the Gospels) in the following excerpt: "We have not put to death the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of God. They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but they thought they did."¹⁷³ Why has Jesus been removed from the cross in the face of so much evidence? For one thing, in the Muslim view, true prophets must be successful as Muhammad was deemed to be. That is, they must triumph over their enemies, not be defeated by them, and emerge as conquering warriors and leaders. Accordingly, Allah would never permit a true prophet to be overcome by adversaries in a hateful and humiliating death, for the compassionate and merciful one gives far more honor, and far better treatment, to those who serve. In these Qur'anic denials of what is a crucial aspect of the Christian faith (etymologically speaking, "crucial" comes from the root behind the word "cross"), Hans Küng has detected what Luther in his own age had called a theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*); that is, one that rejects the notion that God can be present, even revealed, through the darkness of suffering, mocking, shame, and death itself.¹⁷⁴ But if Christ has been removed from these dark things, then they have conquered humanity.

Given this double distancing, which strikes at the heart of the Christian witness, relations between Muslims and Christians are likely to be difficult in the days ahead—if matters of any significance are on the table. In light of this, one current Christian ecumenical approach has chosen to focus almost exclusively on uncontroversial and nonessential matters in its dialog, issues that do not offend either community, such as the following: (1) the sociological aspects of the faiths in terms of law and governance; (2) community relations in the context of interfaith marriages; and (3) questions regarding the means of grace, such as fasting and charity, employed by both faiths.¹⁷⁵

Though Wesley himself had written some very difficult, even trenchant, things about Islam that are stunning in their honesty and bold in their frankness,¹⁷⁶ his principal focus in terms of Muslim and Christian dialog was often on Christian behavior (and how inappropriate it often was!), not Muslim action. To illustrate, and drawing on Wesley's ongoing distinction between real Christians and nominal ones, we note that he criticized those who were called by the name of Christ but whose practice of the faith hardly recommended itself to "the Mahometans."¹⁷⁷ Indeed, for Wesley, the "grand stumbling-block" set before Muslims that prevents them from hearing the gospel aright is none other than "the lives of the Christians."¹⁷⁸ Naturally Wesley was critical of his own Anglican Church in this regard, for one thing because it was near at hand, but he

reserved some of his sharpest opprobrium for the Greek Church, which today is known more popularly as Eastern Orthodoxy. Wesley's censure is worth quoting at length:

Proceed we now to the Christian world. . . . The gross, barbarous ignorance, the deep, stupid superstition, the blind and bitter zeal, and the endless thirst after vain jangling and strife of words, which have reigned for many ages in the Greek Church, and well-nigh banished true religion from among them, make these scarce worthy of the Christian name, and lay an insuperable stumbling-block before the Mahometans.¹⁷⁹

Among other things, Wesley astutely realized that the use of icons by the Eastern church could easily despoil dialog with the Muslim community before it ever had a chance to begin. Indeed, from the days of Muhammad in the seventh century to the present day, Muslims have repeatedly rejected the use of icons and images to portray the divine (in a way similar to Jewish judgment) since such artifacts—these human creations—over time can undermine a monotheistic faith in *practice*. Wesley, however, unlike the Muslim community, was not an iconoclast, arguing against the use of all images, but he did at least recognize the serious danger in this area not only for Christian life but also for its witness.

Wesley lays out his case, as well as some of his reservations, in his carefully crafted, though rarely cited, treatise, *The Origin of Image Worship Among Christians*. In this piece, Wesley appreciates the reason for bringing images into the churches in the first place, that is, to instruct the ignorant and to become "the books of the people,"¹⁸⁰ such that the gospel would have a visual proclamation as it were. Interestingly enough, Wesley likens the use of images in the ancient church to hieroglyphics demonstrating that, in his estimation at least, these pictures or images functioned more as a *language* than as anything else, a language that quickened faith, informed as it was by a distinct content. In time, Wesley notes, these things that were originally intended for good became "a snare for the souls of Christians."¹⁸¹ Priests bowed and knelt before the images that "what were at first designed as monuments of edification, became the instruments of superstition."¹⁸² Wesley chronicles the decline in the following way:

But so it was, that what the Priests at first winked at, they afterwards gave countenance to; and what they once countenanced, they thought themselves obliged in honour to defend; till, at last, superstition came to be preached from the pulpits, and gross idolatry obtruded upon the people for true devotion.¹⁸³

Beyond this, Wesley points out from his knowledge of church history that

"many of the sacred order"¹⁸⁴ were opposed to this innovation and therefore "preached and wrote against the worship of images, showing both the wickedness and folly of it."¹⁸⁵ Vigorous defenders of images and icons, however, some significant theologians among them, naturally denied that the images were worshiped at all (or were worshiped only in the rarest cases) and took comfort in the distinction between *douleia* (veneration) and *latría* (worship that pertains to God alone), a distinction that despite this defense was lost on the common people who often fell into subtle forms of idolatry. Wesley's conclusion of the treatise is, therefore, to the point:

While this, and several other errors, equally contrary to Scripture and reason, are found in the Church, together with the abominable lives of multitudes who call themselves Christians, the very name of Christianity must stink in the nostrils of the Mahometans, Jews, and Infidels.¹⁸⁶

In order to strengthen his case even further about the careful, pastorally mindful, and therefore limited use of icons and images, when Wesley considered the second commandment, that is, the prohibition against making a graven image, he cautioned: "Our religious worship must be governed by the power of *faith*, not by the power of *imagination*."¹⁸⁷

So then, though a serious dialog between Muslims and Christians in the days ahead may be fraught with difficulties, especially with respect to the divinity of Christ and his crucifixion, it need not be unnecessarily complicated by an ongoing *improper* use of icons and images, especially since the reason for their introduction into the church hardly exists today. In light of this, the Pauline counsel and missionary imperative of being all things to all people for the sake of the gospel should be heeded. Obstacles and stumbling blocks should, therefore, be removed for the sake of *others*, for the blessing and edification of all those for whom Christ died, Muslims among them.

Chapter Four

The Holy Spirit: The Presence of the God of Holy Love

*The Holy Ghost, if I depart
The Comforter shall surely come
Shall make the contrite sinner's heart
His loved, his everlasting home.*

—John Lawson, *The Wesley Hymns as a Guide to Scriptural Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 75.

Though John Wesley clearly affirmed a generous role for the Holy Spirit in creation by referring to the Spirit as the first mover in his commentary on Genesis 1:2, he nevertheless explored the activity of the Spirit of God principally in terms of redemption. Colin Williams, for example, notes that although one of the Spirit's offices is "working in the world"—like the Son's nonmediatorial activity—"his main office is his work in believers."¹ Indeed, much of the work of the Holy Spirit, for Wesley, is intimately tied to revelation through which the presence of Christ is seen not simply as a past occurrence but also as a present *reality*. Put another way, the Spirit is other directed and bears witness to the historical Christ and thereby makes effectual a living personal presence in a panoply of grace and benefits. Believers, in other words, are not left to the limits of nature, reason, or the best that their religious imaginations have to offer. Rather, in contemplating the crucifixion and other spiritual truths, they often encounter a subtle, mysterious other: a Spirit, a Real Presence, who glorifies Christ and who makes these and other truths known in a way that goes beyond human expression.

Administrator of Redemption

In making effective the completed work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, as Starkey points out, is "the agent or administrator of redemption."² And so great is this superintending role that Wesley himself observed in his *A Farther Appeal* that "the whole work of salvation, every good thought, word, and work, is altogether by the operation of the Spirit of God."³ Consequently, adherence to orthodoxy, though clearly important, is never enough according to Wesley, for the Christian faith ever involves more than correct teaching to embrace a particular kind of *being*, that is, life in the Spirit. Therefore every person, in order to believe unto salvation, "must receive the Holy Ghost."⁴ This is a point that Wesley repeatedly affirmed throughout the great eighteenth-century revival to the hope of the downtrodden, who understood their need, but to the annoyance of the self-satisfied who did not. To be sure, the necessity of the Spirit's ongoing redemptive work is so considerable that Cushman claims it is the "first principle of Wesley's experimental divinity."⁵

One of Wesley's well-worked themes in displaying the work of the Holy Spirit embraces the language of light. So understood, redemption involves, on one level, a process of increasing illumination that devolves upon the truth that is Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Accordingly, the darkness left in the wake of rebellious, self-referential sin is broken up, at least in some sense, by the *presence* of the Holy Spirit in the restored faculties of prevenient grace such as conscience and a measure of restoration of the moral law, among other gifts. As Wesley puts it, and in a way that conjures up Plato's myth of the cave, the Holy Spirit opens "the eyes of our understanding, bringing us out of darkness into marvellous light."⁶ As the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit takes what is Christ's and renders it to others.

Convincing Grace

Though the *faculties* of prevenient grace are very much in place due to the Spirit's sovereign and restorative agency (a point already developed in chapter 2)—rendering humanity, though fallen, addressable and free enough to receive the further graces of an evoking, calling God—nevertheless, the overtures made to these same faculties, conscience in particular, may be resisted by the stubborn sinner. In other words, the illuminating, revealing work of the Holy Spirit, for Wesley, is purposive, christologically oriented, but unfortunately may be rejected by those who in a mysterious way prefer darkness to light. "The natural man is unholy," Wesley observes, "and loves to be so; and therefore 'resists the Holy Ghost.'" ⁷

Given such truths, the Holy Spirit must play a leading, superintending role in the process of repentance: convicting, illuminating, and teaching—even actively wooing the sinful soul. Moreover, the intelligence of the Spirit is nicely contrasted by Wesley with the dullness, spiritually speaking, of humanity, a dullness that must be overcome. In fact, both Charles and John Wesley referred to unrepentant sinners as sleepers, as slow, insensible, and ignorant about their true condition in the sight of a Holy God. Charles, for instance, remarks in his homily "Awake, Thou That sleepest": "Full of all diseases as he is, he fancies himself in perfect health. Fast bound in misery and iron, he dreams that he is happy and at liberty. He says, 'Peace, peace,' while the devil as 'a strong man armed' is in full possession of his soul." ⁸ And the older brother, for his part, struck the same chord in his sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," in which he writes: "By some awful providence, or by his Word applied with the demonstration of his Spirit, God touches the heart of him that lay asleep in darkness and in the shadow of death. He is terribly shaken out of his sleep." ⁹ Again, the Holy Spirit awakens and "teacheth [us] all things," ¹⁰ opens "the eyes of our understanding," ¹¹ and enlightens us "with all such knowledge as is requisite to our pleasing God." ¹² In other words, awakening and the light of Christ go hand in hand.

The Moral Law

Employing the moral law, which has been reinscribed in some sense as a result of prevenient grace, the Spirit continues to work within the awakened conscience and gives it an inward check, suggesting something once again of the active resistance of sinners to a God of holy love. The moral law as a copy of the divine mind, the *form* of God as sinners are able to bear it, is therefore employed in a conjunction of Word and Spirit to shed increasing light upon the conscience to reveal shafts of the righteousness and justice of God. "The moment the Spirit of the Almighty strikes the heart of him that was till then without God in the world," Wesley points out, "it breaks the hardness of his heart, and creates all things new."¹³ It is at this point that "the Sun of righteousness appears, and shines upon his soul, showing him the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."¹⁴

So then the saving faith of a child of God, for Wesley, "cometh sometimes by reading; though ordinarily by *hearing*,"¹⁵ whereby the Spirit is mediated through the Word, the moral law, as well as the promises of the gospel. When hearers are led to such repentance and faith and receive the forgiveness of sins, it may readily be assumed by some that this represents a genuine synergism or divine/human cooperation in each instance. "Not so," Wesley exclaims, "for man co-operates in the former, but not in the latter. God alone forgives sins,"¹⁶ a forgiveness that is not in any sense a human work (nor is it given upon the *basis* of prior cooperation) and therefore must be *received* as the sheer, utter gift that it is.

In Wesley's practical theology, however, the Spirit's work of conviction is not exhausted in bringing the sinner to repentance. Thus, once a person does truly repent and is justified, a further work awaits, namely, the conviction not of actual sins but of inbred sin—the painful recognition that the carnal nature, with all its lusts and desires, yet remains in the life of the believer. And this second work of convincing grace, what Wesley calls "evangelical repentance,"¹⁷ in which, once again, the moral law plays a leading role, is both similar to and different from the legal repentance previous to justification. It is similar in that it entails self-knowledge and illumination, the realization that all is not well in the heart of the believer, that sin and its darkness in some form are still in fact present. However, it is different in that it is a full conviction of the carnal nature, of the original sin

that "*remains*, though it does not *reign*."^{[18](#)} Here, too, in this later work, the Spirit's convincing and illuminating graces are present. All, then, is not complete in one grand stroke, "till it shall please our Lord to speak to our hearts again, to 'speak the second time, "Be clean." ' "^{[19](#)}

The Presence of the Spirit as Holy Love

Through the painful, though necessary, work of conviction, the Holy Spirit, to use Wesley's own words, "prepares us for his inward kingdom,"²⁰ whereby the heart and its various tempers and affections are transformed by love. Given the transformation of *nature* that occurs in the new birth, the Holy Spirit is now resident in the heart in a new way. Indeed, one of Wesley's favorite ways to describe this transforming presence is in terms of the phrase from Romans 5:5, "The love of God" was also "shed abroad" ²¹ indicating that the filial love of God has now taken root in the heart, making all things new.

Though the Spirit is "already, always, a constitutive part of the person,"²² as Cobb points out, in that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28), nevertheless the Spirit is resident in the heart in a distinct way at regeneration—not, of course, because the Spirit has changed but because believers have. Put another way, it is one and the same Spirit who evokes a response of guilt and conviction in some, due to their soteriological condition, so to speak, and the cry of "Abba Father" in others. To be sure, the *presence* of the Holy Spirit in the heart at the new birth in an array of efficacious graces results not in an incremental change, that is, one of degree, but a *qualitative* change, that of a transformed nature such that believers become what they have never been before properly speaking, namely, holy.

In his practical theology, Wesley highlighted the distinctiveness of what becoming holy entails in two key ways. First of all, the very structure of the *ordo salutis*, the order of salvation, has the two major *qualitative* transformations of the Christian life as its foci, namely, justification and regeneration, on the one hand, and entire sanctification, on the other. Second, Wesley makes an important distinction between works done before justification, and the regeneration that ever accompanies it, and those that follow afterward. The former, on the one hand, are in some sense good because the prevenient grace of God informs them, but they are not yet good, properly speaking. The latter works, on the other hand, are indeed good by any measure because it is the initially sanctifying grace of God from which they arise.

As Wesley had learned from reading Jeremy Taylor, Thomas à Kempis, and William Law as a young man, the love of God and neighbor is, after all, the point of it all. So focused was Wesley's theology on this end or goal of religion

that he remarked on one occasion, "how far is love, even with many wrong opinions, to be preferred before truth itself without love? We may die without the knowledge of many truths and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom. But if we die without love, what will knowledge avail?"²³ And elsewhere in Wesley's last sermon before Oxford University, where its professors and students had gathered in St Mary's Church, he wryly noted that "without love all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit."²⁴

To consider in greater detail what kind of love is then implanted in the heart as a consequence of regenerating grace is to begin the journey of considering one of Wesley's major and lasting conjunctions, namely, *holy love*. And it is no one less than the "infinite and eternal Spirit of God," Wesley exclaims, who is ". . . the immediate cause of all holiness in us."²⁵ As such, holiness is not a human possibility at all; accordingly, no amount of effort, educational, moral, or otherwise, can bring it into being. In fact, Wesley compares this renewal in holiness effectuated by the *presence* of the Holy Spirit to "a power equivalent to that which raises the dead,"²⁶ a truth that has always proved unsettling to those who had mistaken the Christian faith for a particular species of morality or public virtue. So understood, the holiness of redemptive love, which makes it distinct from all other kinds, is a divine attribute that must graciously be *received* by grace through faith. Again, it is the quality of the uncanny, even numinous, divine life that is communicated to the soul that has now become receptive through the ongoing agency of the Spirit. Moreover, the transformation of holy love, the renewal of the divine image in which humanity was created, also entails aesthetic dimensions as the believer, in some sense, begins to reflect the divine glory and beauty in a new way.

So concerned was Wesley that this inward transformation by the Spirit occur among the Methodists that he chided them on one occasion by noting, "The most prevailing fault among the Methodists is to be *too outward* in religion. We are continually forgetting that the kingdom of God is *within us*, and that our fundamental principle is, We are saved *by faith*, producing all *inward* holiness."²⁷ Demonstrating the considerable influence of German Pietists on him, both Moravian and Hallensian, Wesley seated the kingdom of God in the depths of the human heart. Commenting on Luke 17:21, for example, he observed: "Look not for it [the kingdom of God] in distant times or remote places: it is now in the midst of you: it is come: it is present in the soul of every believer: it is a spiritual kingdom, an internal principle. Wherever it exists, it exists in the heart."²⁸ And in his reflections on John 3:16, Wesley continued this

salient theme:

That knowledge will not avail thee unless thou be born again-Otherwise thou canst not see, that is, experience and enjoy, either the inward or the glorious kingdom of God. In this solemn discourse our Lord shows, that no external profession, no ceremonial ordinances or privileges of birth, could entitle any to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom: that an entire change of heart as well as of life was necessary for that purpose.^{[29](#)}

In these pointed observations, Wesley, of course, is not denying the communal, more corporate, dimensions of the kingdom. He is simply affirming that these dimensions must be rooted in a personal way in the holy tempers and affections brought into being by the Spirit.

With this focus on the tempers or dispositions of the heart, Wesley was able to highlight the growth in sanctity, the modification of what the heart is disposed toward and loves, as well as the inculcation of virtue, that are ever necessary for the mature Christian life. Not wanting believers to repeat the first works of sin and repentance afresh, in a cycle of rising and falling, Wesley maintained that the work of the Spirit in adjusting the dispositions of the heart to their proper end results in the habituation of holy tempers, over time, that are not only long-lived but also not easily shaken. So understood, the kingdom of God is implanted in the soul by the initially sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit who, in setting up "his throne in our hearts," as Wesley points out, fills believers with "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."^{[30](#)} In other words, it is this divine presence, tabernacling among believers, along with the attendant dispositional transformation, that is called, to use Wesley's own words, " 'the kingdom of heaven' because it is (in a degree) heaven opened in the soul."^{[31](#)} Not surprising, Wesley goes on to link happiness and holiness strongly in his practical theology, which is yet another way of underscoring that religion is "an inward principle; that it is no other than the mind that was in Christ; or in other words, the renewal of the soul after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness."^{[32](#)} And Wesley adds, clarifying his point, "that this can never be wrought in us but by the power of the Holy Ghost."^{[33](#)}

The Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit

Throughout much of the eighteenth century, Wesley and the Methodists were accused of making too much of the gifts or chrisms of the Holy Spirit. Drawing a distinction between the extraordinary gifts (such as healing, working miracles, prophesying, discerning spirits, and speaking and interpreting tongues) and the ordinary ones (convincing speech, persuasion, knowledge, faith, and easy elocution), Wesley claimed in a letter to Mr. Downes, rector of St. Michael's Church, that "I utterly disclaim the 'extraordinary gifts of the Spirit,' and all other 'influences and operations of the Holy Ghost' than those that are common to ³⁴ Indeed, Wesley himself, apart from his detractors, affirmed the value of making this distinction so that the church could "stop the growth of enthusiasm,"³⁵ what we call fanaticism today.

In Wesley's view, the extraordinary gifts had been given to the early church so that by means of them, "God acknowledged the Christians to be his people, and not the Jews."³⁶ That is, "the exigencies of the apostolical age," demonstrating the way of salvation flows only through Jesus Christ, "required the miraculous gifts," Wesley argues, "but these soon ceased."³⁷ In this perspective, then, the extraordinary gifts were common in the church for little more than two or three centuries when the judgment of the church against the Montanists and the rise of a more formal Christianity, introduced by Constantine, began to result in some unintended consequences. This decline was due, in part, not only to an almost unswerving focus on the *office* of ministry (a bulwark against heretical teaching), to the relative neglect of the chrisms or gifts, but also to the increasing "worldliness" of Christians themselves who in many instances retained the form of religion but lacked the power thereof.³⁸

Moreover, wanting to avoid "curious, needless inquiries," in terms of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, Wesley often shifted the discussion to focus more on the ordinary *fruits* of the Spirit, "which we are assured will remain throughout all ages,"³⁹ and which continue as important signs of vital, scriptural Christianity. Suggesting a connection with the direct witness of the Holy Spirit that one is a child of God, Wesley sees the fruit of the Spirit as a consequence of this witness especially when he writes: "The immediate result of this testimony is 'the fruit of the Spirit'; namely, 'love, joy, peace; longsuffering, gentleness, goodness.'"⁴⁰ These elements not only suggest the contrast between the "fruits

of the flesh" and the "fruits of the Spirit," developed by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:19-25, but also reveal that through the empowering agency of the Holy Spirit, believers are endued with faith, are enabled to crucify the flesh to fulfill all outward righteousness, and are strengthened to walk as Christ also walked—a constellation of graces the entirety of which Wesley simply refers to as having "the mind which was in Christ."⁴¹

Beyond this, the fruit of the Spirit according to Wesley demonstrates that the Holy Spirit, invisible though perceptible in effects, "actually works love and these other tempers in those that are led by him."⁴² Indeed, Wesley strongly associated the fruit of the Spirit as the "undoubted privilege of every real Christian,"⁴³ suggesting that these graces—especially righteousness, love, joy, and peace—should be common among Christians and not rare. That is, "true religion, does not consist in external observances," Wesley cautions, "but in righteousness, the image of God stamped on the heart, the love of God and man, accompanied with the peace that passeth all understanding, and joy in the Holy Ghost."⁴⁴ Some people in Wesley's day counseled believers "not to regard *frames* or *feelings* . . . either love, joy, peace, or any other fruit of the Spirit,"⁴⁵ counsel that Wesley always deemed aberrant since it struck at the fruit that should inevitably flow from the reality of walking after the Spirit.

The Assurance of the Holy Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit, a conscience free of offense, and keeping the moral law as an expression of the will of God all constitute what Wesley called the witness of our own spirit, or simply the indirect witness. This measure of assurance that marks the life of a believer arises from the conclusion drawn from the evidences of the proper Christian faith. Thus, Wesley reasons that "everyone who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God; . . . I have the fruit of the Spirit. And hence I rationally conclude: therefore I am a child of God."⁴⁶ And again, "It all resolves into this: those who have these marks [a conscience void of offense, faith, hope, love, keeping the commandments of Christ, the fruit of the spirit etc.], they are the children of God. But we have these marks: therefore we are children of God."⁴⁷

As important as the indirect witness is in Wesley's doctrine of assurance, it does not constitute the entirety of what he means by this teaching. "Yet all this is no other than rational evidence: the 'witness of our spirit,' our reason or understanding,"⁴⁸ Wesley exclaims. Consequently, if this witness were the only one taken into account, there would then be a risk of formalism, or even self-justification, as one attempted to infer one's Christian status from works or rational evidences. But Wesley does not leave it at this and goes on to argue that there is a witness over and above all these rational evidences just cited:

By "the testimony of the Spirit" I mean an inward impression of the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God, that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.⁴⁹

And this direct witness to the soul, reflecting the truth of Romans 8:16, should be the *common* privilege—though many are ignorant of it—of a child of God.

During the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, Wesley's affirmation of the direct witness of the Holy Spirit often resulted in the charge of enthusiasm from a number of critics, Josiah Tucker and Joseph Trapp among them. In fact, Charles Wheatly, a very animated detractor, ascended the pulpit of St. Paul's Cathedral in London on one occasion and intoned that the Methodists were "rapturous enthusiasts."⁵⁰ As Cragg points out, "Wesley was ridiculed and abused because the eighteenth century was not prepared to tolerate, still less to welcome, an ardent evangelical revival."⁵¹ But some of the most searing

criticism, bordering on invective, flowed from the pen of George Lavington, the Bishop of Exeter, in his *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*. Wesley's sermon "The Nature of Enthusiasm" was his quick response. In this work, Wesley demonstrates that enthusiasm, rightly understood, consists in one's imagining to have what gifts and graces are actually lacking, or one's expecting to attain the end or goal of religion without employing the means of grace. Both of these errors smack of presumption, and so Wesley in effect turned the tables on his critics and held up instead the presumptive nominal Christianity of his age as the real species of enthusiasm. "Thus expect a daily growth in that pure and holy religion which the world always did, and always will, call enthusiasm," Wesley writes; "but which to all who are saved from real enthusiasm—from merely nominal Christianity—is the wisdom of God and the power of God."⁵²

But there were other challenges as well. Thus, the broader traditions of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy had never been known for underscoring the comfort of assurance that emerges from the direct witness of the Spirit. Instead, believers were often directed to the sacraments or, in some instances, to the hierarchy itself or to the recognition that they belonged to a sacred society, the bearer of redemption throughout the ages, for what comfort could be had. In fact, the Council of Trent specifically repudiated the direct witness of the Holy Spirit as essential to the Christian faith. "They have decreed," as Wesley observes, " 'if any man hold (*fiduciam*) trust, confidence, or assurance of pardon, to be essential to faith, let him be accursed.' "⁵³ And Starkey maintains that Eastern Orthodoxy as well has so "subjected the Holy Spirit to a sacred time and place, to tradition and the sacraments . . . that [it has not] had any creative contribution to make to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁴ This institutionalization of the Spirit, what Outler calls its "domestication," goes back "as far as Simon Magus, and always it had tended to link Spirit too closely with the institutional church."⁵⁵

For Wesley, however, the doctrine of assurance, the direct witness in particular, was so vital to the Christian faith that he not only referred to it as "one grand part of the testimony which God has given [the Methodists] to bear to all mankind,"⁵⁶ but also considered it to be an important element of the proper Christian faith. "Everyone therefore who denies the existence of such a testimony," Wesley declares, "does, in effect, deny justification by faith."⁵⁷ However, many people even today think that the major doctrinal emphasis of Methodism in the eighteenth century was entire sanctification. While this is indeed true, it must also be borne in mind that John Wesley gave almost equal

attention to the direct witness of the Spirit in an age that was more than content with simply rational evidences. For Wesley, scriptural Christianity ever goes beyond the limits of self-referential reason to offer the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Again, the proper Christian faith surpasses correct doctrinal teaching and is not simply a train of ideas in the head. Rather, it ever entails the *presence* of the Holy Spirit in the human heart issuing in nothing less than the personal communion of holy love.

Assurance Nuanced

Wesley's doctrine of Christian assurance underwent more modifications over time than any of his other major teachings. It is therefore an important window on his overall and dynamic practical theology. To illustrate, when John Wesley was under the strong influence of the English Moravians, he closely identified justifying faith with full assurance.⁵⁸ However, by 1739, he began to realize that there are both degrees of faith *and* degrees of assurance and that a child of God may exercise justifying faith, which is mixed with both doubt and fear.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, a second issue, which can be differentiated from the one just cited, concerns the question of whether Wesley ever lowered or abandoned the standard of the proper Christian faith (real Christianity) in light of his newly articulated distinctions.

The initial answer to this question must be yes since Wesley obviously modified his earlier erroneous views in two key respects. First of all, the English Moravians propounded a view of redemption that, according to Heitzenrater, "essentially equated conversion with perfection."⁶⁰ In time, however, Wesley distinguished freedom from sin in terms of its guilt, power, and being, and thereby repudiated the Moravian doctrine on this score.⁶¹ Simply put, for Wesley, redemption or initial sanctification entailed freedom from the guilt (justification) and power (regeneration) of sin, but not freedom from its being (entire sanctification). In other words, the carnal nature or inbred sin remained even in the children of God.

Second, and more important for the present topic, Wesley likewise modified his earlier view that had associated full assurance with justifying faith.⁶² Indeed, less than a year after he began the practice of field preaching, Wesley conceived the doctrine of justification by faith no longer in terms of full assurance but in terms of a *measure* of assurance.⁶³ But is this qualified assurance, occasionally marked by doubt and fear, necessary for redemption, for what constitutes real Christianity? Here the picture becomes somewhat complicated. For example, in a letter to John Bennet on June 1, 1744, Wesley states, among other things, that none is a Christian who does not have the marks of a Christian, one of which is "the witness of God's Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God."⁶⁴ Similarly, at the first Methodist conference that same year, it was affirmed by those present that "all *true Christians* have such a faith as implies an assurance of God's

love."⁶⁵ However, by the time of the next conference in 1745, the question was reconsidered and a slightly different answer was offered. Wesley wrote:

Q.1. Is a sense of God's pardoning love absolutely necessary to our being in his favor? Or may there be some exempt cases?

A. We dare not say there are not.

Q.2. Is it necessary to inward and outward holiness?

A. We incline to think it is.⁶⁶

In a similar vein, the conference Minutes of 1747 noted that there may be exempt cases, that justifying faith may not always be accompanied by a measure of assurance. But the conference then offered this caution: "It is dangerous to ground a general doctrine on a few particular experiments."⁶⁷ In addition, although this conference, like the one in 1745, recognized that there are, after all, exceptional cases, it nevertheless clarified its meaning and affirmed: "But this we know, if Christ is not revealed in them [by the Holy Spirit], they are not yet Christian believers."⁶⁸ In fact, in 1745, though this was a year of many changes, Wesley had still not retreated from his teaching that assurance is a vital ingredient of the *true* Christian faith, as evidenced by his following remarks made in a letter to "John Smith" that same year:

"No man can be a *true Christian* without such an inspiration of the Holy Ghost as fills his heart with peace and joy and love; which he who perceives not, has it not." This is the point for which alone I contend. And this I take to be the very foundation of Christianity.⁶⁹

Moreover, in 1747, Wesley continued this emphasis once again in a letter to "John Smith" and stated: "The sum of what I offered before concerning *perceptible inspiration* was this. 'Every Christian believer has a perceptible testimony of God's Spirit that he is a child of God.' "⁷⁰

In light of the preceding evidence, it is clear that Wesley even after 1745 still identified, for the most part, the assurance that one's sins are forgiven as integral to the proper Christian faith. Not surprising, then, in a revealing letter to his brother Charles, written a month after the 1747 conference, John illustrates his doctrine of assurance by pointing out: "(1), that there is such an explicit assurance; (2), that it is the common privilege of *real Christians*; (3), that it is *the proper Christian faith*, which purifieth the heart and overcometh the world."⁷¹ In other words, the observation that there are exceptions to Wesley's normal association of justification by faith and a measure of assurance is accurate; however, that he identified this faith that lacks the witness of the Spirit

with real, proper Christianity is not.

In his correspondence with Richard Thompson during 1755, Wesley clarified his doctrine of assurance in two key respects. On the one hand, he argued that there is an intermediate state between a child of the devil and a child of God and that those who are not assured that their sins are forgiven may have a degree of faith and, therefore, may be admitted to the Lord's Supper.⁷² On the other hand, Wesley continued to emphasize the importance of assurance for the Christian faith and asserted: "But still I believe *the proper Christian faith* which purifies the heart implies such a conviction."⁷³ Indeed, in this same piece, Wesley pointed out with regard to assurance that "the whole Christian Church in the first centuries enjoyed it."⁷⁴ And again he ex claimed: "If that knowledge were destroyed, or wholly *withdrawn*, I could not then say, I had Christian faith."⁷⁵ In fact, in his summary sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," produced in 1765, Wesley actually linked saving faith with assurance by maintaining: "And it is certain this [saving] faith necessarily implies an *assurance* . . . that 'Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.'"⁷⁶

Wesley's subsequent letters to Richard Thompson the next year contained even further clarification on this topic and one significant, though seldom understood, exception. Concerning this last point, Wesley admitted to Mr. Thompson on 18 February 1756, in a way reminiscent of the 1745 and 1747 conferences, that one may be in a state of justification and yet lack assurance. These are the exempt cases or exceptions as noted earlier. Thus, when Wesley posed the question in his letter, "Can a man who has not a clear assurance that his sins are forgiven be in a state of justification?" he replied, "I believe there are *some* instances of it."⁷⁷ However, it was not until much later that Wesley indicated *the reason* for this exception. In a letter to Dr. Rutherford in 1768, Wesley elaborates: Yet I do not affirm there are no exceptions to this general rule [of the association of a measure of assurance with justification]. Possibly some may be in the favour of God, and yet go mourning all the day long. But I believe this is usually owing either to disorder of body or ignorance of the gospel promises.⁷⁸

Two issues that are often confused need to be separated here. First of all, the elderly Wesley still did not identify or confuse the faith of a servant, and its measure of acceptance, with the assurance that one's sins are forgiven; since being under "the spirit of bondage," a servant, properly speaking, lacks justifying faith. Indeed, in a letter to Thomas Davenport, drafted in 1781, Wesley counsels the suffering gentleman who was then under a spirit of fear that "you have now

received the spirit of bondage. Is it not the forerunner of the Spirit of adoption? He is not afar off. Look up! . . . He is nigh that justifieth!"⁷⁹ Such advice clearly reveals, once again, that those under the spirit of bondage do indeed lack justifying faith. More important, a few years later in his sermon "On the Discoveries of Faith," Wesley specifically links the spirit of bondage with the faith of a servant, indicating that this faith has yet to *receive* the forgiveness of sins. Wesley observes: "Exhort him to press on by all possible means, till he passes 'from faith to faith'; from the faith of a *servant* to the faith of a *son*; from the *spirit of bondage* unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love."⁸⁰

What then are the traits of the spirit of bondage displayed in the sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," written in 1746, and that were later identified with the faith of a servant? Those under a spirit of bondage, Wesley argues, feel sorrow and remorse; they fear death, the growth in grace, experienced by believers since their justification. The hermeneutical clues, then, for a proper interpretation of Wesley's texts need to be gathered not from later American Methodist tradition, but from Wesley's own language and its larger context—clues that will take into account the broad similarity, indeed the parallelism, with respect to the role of the Holy Spirit in terms of both regeneration and entire sanctification.¹⁰⁵ Only in this way will Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and assurance, or any other doctrine for that matter, be properly understood.

devil, and humanity; they desire to break free from the chains of sin but cannot, and their cry of despair is typified by the Pauline expression: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"⁸¹ In fact, in this sermon, Wesley specifically identifies "this whole struggle of one who is 'under the law' " with the spirit of bondage and with the spiritual and psychological dynamics of the seventh chapter of Romans.⁸² More to the point, these traits just cited are hardly the attributes that constitute real Christianity according to John Wesley since he defined true Christians, at the very least, as those who believe in Christ such that "sin hath no more dominion over him."⁸³

Second, Wesley recognized that in some exceptional cases those who are justified and regenerated (and hence children of God) may lack an assurance that their sins are forgiven due to either ignorance or bodily disorder.⁸⁴ This means, then, that Wesley actually defined the faith of a servant in at least two key ways. The first, which is a broad usage and occurs repeatedly in Wesley's writings, *excludes* justification, regeneration, and assurance and corresponds to the spirit of bondage. The second, which is a narrow usage and seldom occurs,

corresponds to the exempt cases and exceptions just noted and *includes* justification and regeneration but not assurance. Interesting enough, although the faith of a servant in this second sense is obviously Christian (saving) faith since it includes justification and regeneration, Wesley still did not refer to it as the *proper* Christian faith since it lacks assurance.

The preceding discussion of Wesley's distinctions pertaining to assurance can now be outlined into three major groups as follows:

Faith of a Child of God (Real Christianity)	Faith of a Servant (Broad)	Faith of a Servant (Narrow)
Under the Spirit of Adoption	Under the Spirit of Bondage	Not under the Spirit of Bondage
Have the Witness (Spirit)	Lack the Witness	Lack the Witness
Justified and Born of God	Not Justified and Born of God	Justified and Born of God
Have the Witness of the Spirit	Lack the Witness Due to Sin (Many People; Common)	Lack the Witness Due to Ignorance or Bodily Disorder (Few People; Exceptions)

So then, by 1771, Wesley had distinguished full assurance, which excludes doubt and fear, from initial assurance, which does not.⁸⁵ He had come to a greater appreciation of the faith of a servant and its degree of acceptance; and he had realized that in exceptional cases one may even be justified and yet lack assurance due to either ignorance of the gospel promises or to bodily disorder. Nevertheless, the theme that Wesley chose to develop during this last period of his life was none other than a strong identification of assurance with the proper (real) Christian faith. To illustrate, in January 1787, Wesley acknowledged that "to believe Christ gave Himself for me is the faith of a Christian,"⁸⁶ and a year later he not only once again clarified the distinction between the faith of a servant and that of a son, but also maintained that assurance is an integral component of the proper Christian faith. In his sermon "On Faith," Wesley reasons:

Thus the faith of a child is *properly and directly* a divine conviction whereby

every child of God is enabled to testify, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And *whosoever hath this*, "the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit that he is a child of God."⁸⁷

Even more significant, there is nothing in Wesley's often-quoted letter to Melville Horne in 1788 that detracts from this identification and emphasis. Thus, in this correspondence, Wesley maintains that the servants of God who lack assurance are not thereby condemned, a commonplace by now, but he then goes on to assert that "we preach assurance as we always did, as a *common* privilege of the children of God."⁸⁸

The Full Assurance of Faith

In considering those who are advanced in grace, Wesley employed the terminology of the "full assurance of faith" to refer to the Spirit's witness to entire sanctification. This assurance, unlike its incremental predecessors, is *qualitatively* distinct in that it excludes all doubt and fear since the heart has *now* been perfected in love. As the author of 1 John explains: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love" (1 John 4:18). Wesley explores the different measures of assurance suggested in this passage in the following fashion: "A natural man has neither fear nor love; one that is awakened, fear without love; a babe in Christ, love and fear; a father in Christ, love without fear."⁸⁹ Moreover, though such an assurance, a plerophory of faith, does indeed exclude doubt and fear, Wesley notes that it "is not properly . . . an assurance of what is future, but only of what *now* is."⁹⁰ That is, it depicts not a future possibility, but a present *reality*.

The Question of a Specialized Vocabulary

Though much of the material in Wesley's writings on the role of the Holy Spirit in entire sanctification focuses on the issues pertaining to assurance, rather than on the purification of the heart itself, did Wesley ever employ a specialized vocabulary, namely Pentecostal terminology, to describe the Spirit's work in this area? In other words, did Wesley, as some writers claim, equate the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" with entire sanctification in an almost exclusive way?

It must be noted that Wesley employed three basic phrases to display the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer: (1) "receiving the Holy Ghost"; (2) "filled with the Holy Ghost"; and (3) "baptized with the Holy Ghost." With respect to the first phrase, "receiving the Holy Ghost," Wesley specifically rejected a restriction of its use simply to Christian perfection. Accordingly, in a letter to Joseph Benson in 1770, he cautions: If they like to call this [being perfected in love] "receiving the Holy Ghost," they may: only the phrase in that sense is not scriptural and not quite proper; *for they all "received the Holy Ghost" when they were justified*. God then "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father."⁹¹

Likewise, Wesley used the second phrase, "filled with the Holy Ghost," in an interchangeable way: sometimes in terms of the new birth and at other times in terms of entire sanctification. He, therefore, did not limit it to a second work of grace. Writing about Christians in general in his *Farther Appeal*, he affirms: "Indeed I do not mean, that Christians now receive the Holy Ghost in order to work miracles; but they do doubtless now 'receive,' yea, are 'filled with, the Holy Ghost,' in order to be filled ⁹² Again, in his sermon "Scriptural Christianity," preached at Oxford University in 1744, Wesley expresses the view "that every Christian should be Spirit-filled."⁹³ The implication here, then, is that "anyone who is not Spirit-filled is not a Christian."⁹⁴ Moreover, in his sermon "The First-fruits of the Spirit," written two years later, Wesley uses the phrase "filled with the Holy Ghost" to refer to *all* Christians, anyone who is in Christ. " 'They who are of Christ,' who 'abide in him,' " he notes, "These are they who indeed 'walk after the Spirit.' Being filled with faith and with the Holy Ghost."⁹⁵ Once again, there is no restrictive use here.

Nevertheless, in fairness and for accuracy, it must also be indicated that Wesley did, at times, associate the language of "filled with the Holy Ghost" with

those who are perfected in love. Thus, in a subsequent letter to Joseph Benson in 1771, he declares: "A *babe* in Christ . . . has the witness *sometimes*. A young man . . . has it continually. I believe one that is *perfected in love*, or *filled with the Holy Ghost*, may be properly termed a *father*."⁹⁶ However, this passage and others like it in no way undermine the present position being offered: that Wesley used this vocabulary to speak of entire sanctification is freely acknowledged; that he limited his language to such usage, however, is not.

Beyond these considerations, it might at least be expected that Wesley intimately identified the third phrase, "baptized with the Holy Ghost," with entire sanctification. Yet here, too, the evidence suggests otherwise. Commenting on Acts 1:5 ("Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." KJV), Wesley notes: "And so are *all true believers*, to the end of the world."⁹⁷ Ever cautious in his concern over the gifts and graces of the children of God, Wesley was well aware that the ministry of the Spirit is richly enjoyed by those who are justified by the blood of Christ and born of God—a spiritual state that need not be minimized for the sake of another. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and Christian perfection, then, might have been strongly linked in later Methodism, but clearly not in the writings of the father of Methodism himself.⁹⁸

In the face of such considerable evidence, some scholars have nevertheless put forth a contrary position. A favorite way of accomplishing this, and one taken by the late George Turner, is to point out that Wesley "endorsed Fletcher's last 'check' in which Fletcher equates Christian perfection with the baptism of the Holy Spirit."⁹⁹ And Oswalt, for his part, suggested that "Wesley himself, with his almost intuitive feel for the wholeness of biblical teaching, [was] responsible for Charles' and ¹⁰⁰ More recently, Wood has maintained that Wesley gave Fletcher his "imprimatur," a designation that supposedly suggests Fletcher's views can now be read without much ado as those of Wesley himself."¹⁰¹ However, Wesley's thought should not be confused with Fletcher's (or with his brother's, for that matter). And the former's endorsement of the *Checks* does not indicate that he approved of every line or phrase of the latter's work. One has only to recall the Calvinistic controversies of the 1770s to realize the significance of this last point. Recall that the Hill brothers had charged Wesley with inconsistency due to some of the teachings expressed in his *Christian Library*. However, in his defense, Wesley simply distinguished his thought from what he had reprinted. The same caveat applies in this present context as well.

Beyond these considerations—and more important from our perspective—a literary analysis of Wesley's language in this area reveals that he did not, as is

mistakenly supposed, employ a unique Pentecostal terminology to describe the Spirit's role in entire sanctification. Whether Wesley was describing conviction of sin, cleansing, or assurance, he employed roughly the *same vocabulary* to elucidate the admittedly quite different works of regeneration, on the one hand, and entire sanctification, on the other hand. Observe Wesley's "parallel" language in the following excerpts:

Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith.^{[102](#)}

None therefore ought to believe that the work is done, till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, *as clearly as his justification.*^{[103](#)}

Q. 16. But how do you know, that you are sanctified, saved from your inbred corruption?

A. I can know it *no otherwise* than I know that I am justified."^{[104](#)}

Moreover, what differences will emerge between the Spirit's role in justification and in entire sanctification are reflected not so much in Wesley's language itself (although they are present here as well), but in the referents of that language, that is, in the specific *context*, the theological setting in the *ordo salutis*, in which that language reverberates. Thus, the different role of the Holy Spirit in witnessing to a believer's entire sanctification needs to be understood not only in terms of the Spirit's witness to justification, but also in terms of the soteriological distance, the growth in grace, experienced by believers since their justification. The hermeneutical clues, then, for a proper interpretation of Wesley's texts need to be gathered not from later American Methodist tradition, but from Wesley's own language and its larger context—clues that will take into account the broad similarity, indeed the parallelism, with respect to the role of the Holy Spirit in terms of both regeneration and entire sanctification.^{[105](#)} Only in this way will Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and assurance, or any other doctrine for that matter, be properly understood.

The Full Assurance of Hope

Surprisingly enough, the full assurance of faith, though it is so often associated with Christian perfection, is not the highest measure of assurance in Wesley's practical theology. In reflecting on the testimony of Scripture, Wesley posited a different kind of witness, namely, the full assurance of hope. By way of contrast, the full assurance of faith relates to present pardon; the full assurance of hope to future glory. Again, the former is a full conviction of present pardon without doubt or fear; the latter is an assurance of "having no more doubt of reigning with him in glory than if they already saw him coming in the clouds of heaven."¹⁰⁶ Beyond this, Wesley considers the full assurance of hope in terms of being graced and gifted by the Holy Spirit in a distinct way. "God 'sealeth us with the Spirit of promise,' " he observes, "by giving us 'the full assurance of hope': such a confidence of receiving all the promises of God, as excludes the possibility of doubting."¹⁰⁷

At the very highest levels along the *ordo salutis*, then, Wesley's practical theology turns once more (as in his doctrine of Creation) to underscore the utter freedom of God to give such *gifts* in accordance with the divine will and purpose, and not on the basis of prior co-operation, not even in terms of those who are entirely sanctified. To be sure, not only did Wesley clearly teach that not all those perfected in love have the full assurance of hope ("This is by no means essential to, or inseparable from, perfect love"¹⁰⁸), but also perhaps more important, and in a way that highlights the freedom and superintending will of God, Wesley contended that such a boon, that one shall endure to the end, was showered upon some, Mr. Grimshaw in particular, who were not even perfected in love!¹⁰⁹ Thus, Wesley's theology, once again, breaks through the exclusive synergistic readings that are often superimposed on his far more sophisticated thought—thought that never fails to highlight the goodness, freedom, and sheer bounty of a God of holy love.

Assurance (Regeneration)	Full Assurance of Hope (Entire Sanctification)	Full Assurance of Hope (Either Regeneration or Entire Sanctification)
A measure of assurance;	A Clear conviction of being now in the favour of god as	Excludes all doubt and

occasionally marked
by doubt and fear

excludes all doubt and fear

fear of our final salvation

Moreover, at these highest levels of giftedness, Wesley's theology begins to look more like that of some of his Calvinist detractors than some have previously imagined, especially when he explores the full assurance of hope in terms of future *perseverance*. Thus, in his notes on Hebrews 6:11, Wesley points out: "the full assurance of hope . . . is the same degree of divine evidence (wrought in the soul by the same immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost) of persevering grace, and of eternal glory."¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Wesley sought to prevent an antinomian misunderstanding of this teaching, one that would pervert this wonderful gift into a license to sin. And so in an important letter to Hester Ann Roe, he makes a vital distinction between his own teaching that those marked by the full assurance of hope "shall enjoy the glory of God, as excludes all doubt and fear concerning this" and the *opinion* that "no saint shall fall from grace."¹¹¹ Put another way, succumbing to the power or dominion of sin clouds the full assurance of hope, "which cannot subsist any longer than the heart cleaves steadfastly to God."¹¹² Such an assurance, then, is consonant with ongoing holiness, and it, therefore, can be shaken. Furthermore, in an earlier letter to a young disciple, Wesley had already offered a few qualifications so that this teaching would not be viewed in a way that undermines the very purpose of redemption, the inculcation of holy love:

Your concern is with the present moment: Your business is, to live to-day. In every sense, let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. It is true, the full assurance of hope excludes all doubt of our final salvation; but it does not, and cannot, continue any longer than we walk closely with God. And it does not include any assurance of our future behaviour; neither do I know any word in all the Bible which gives us any authority to look for a testimony of this kind.¹¹³

So then Wesley clearly affirmed the full assurance of hope as a species of preserving grace (and one that brings great comfort to the soul), and yet his ongoing concern for holiness caused him to distinguish such an assurance from a presumptive and mistaken confidence that was not sufficiently attentive to the divine will, notions that could unfortunately be found in the folk religion of his day.

The Perceptibility of Grace

Since the witness of our own spirit consists in such effects as the fruit of the Spirit among other things, and since the direct witness of the Holy Spirit is more immediate than this and is not properly an effect but a cause, then it seems to follow that in Wesley's practical theology, believers should be able to know the Giver, at least in some sense, beyond the gifts—or else why postulate a direct witness at all?

At any rate, in an age steeped in empiricism (Locke's essay *Concerning Human Understanding*, for example, had been published in 1690, and Hume's treatise *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* in 1748), Wesley entertained the far more modest question of how the operations of the Holy Spirit may be known. Rejecting the notion that the work of the Spirit is perceptible through what he calls "sensible feelings or perceptions"¹¹⁴—in other words, through the five natural senses—Wesley postulates spiritual senses that are operative through the powers of faith whereby some of the sublime realities of grace may be known. In his *Farther Appeal*, he explains:

It is necessary that you have *the hearing ear*, and the *seeing eye*, emphatically so called; that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood, to be "the evidence of things not seen," as your bodily senses are of visible things; to be the avenues to the invisible world, to discern spiritual objects, and to furnish you with ideas of what the outward "eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard."¹¹⁵

Elsewhere in a letter to the Reverend Mr. Downes, drafted in 1759, Wesley sets up an analogy between grace as "perceptible to the heart"¹¹⁶ and sensible objects as discernable by the natural senses, demonstrating once again that his basic orientation to human knowing, as Matthews maintains, was some form of empiricism.¹¹⁷ Such knowledge, a gracious gift in many respects, is sufficient to help believers distinguish between "the light wherewith the sun of righteousness shines upon our heart" and the "sparks of our own kindling."¹¹⁸ Moreover, when Wesley turns his attention to the direct witness of the Holy Spirit in particular, his observations suggest that the Spirit is known (in some fashion) by believers, even though elements of this witness remain a mystery. "The *manner* how the divine testimony is manifested to the heart I do not take upon me to explain," Wesley writes; " 'Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I

cannot attain unto it.' "[119](#) And he is equally cautious whether the personal reality of this direct witness can be *communicated* or suitably explained to others: "But yet he who hath that witness in himself cannot explain it to one who hath not. Nor indeed is it to be expected that he should,"[120](#) for these things are spiritually discerned.

Beyond this, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human heart for Wesley implies a continual inspiration, "God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God."[121](#) Put another way, a continual action of God upon the soul evokes a reaction of the soul upon God.[122](#) This dynamic understanding suggests a basic rhythm to the serious Christian life, whereby the prevenient action of God (in the form of divine initiative) in bestowing a number of graces is received by the heart, in its openness to the divine leading and purpose, and is thereby enabled to respond. But for Wesley, there is no responding without first of all receiving. The soul must be receptive, even pliant, in terms of both the Giver and the gifts.

The Trinity

Given Wesley's views on the dynamic role the Holy Spirit plays in implanting the mind of Christ in the believing soul, it is not surprising to learn that he modified the Anglican Article "Of Faith in the Holy Trinity" when he prepared the Methodist version for America. The original Anglican Article reads as follows:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.^{[123](#)}

Wesley's editorial change involved the omission of the phrase "or passions," thereby indicating that God is not without passions, properly understood, in that holy love itself is a passion.^{[124](#)} This omission, then, is indicative of the generous role the Holy Spirit plays in Wesley's theology in inculcating the holy tempers or passions of love and thereby renewing the *image of God* in which humanity was created.

The Filioque Clause

This concern for a dynamic and relational conception of the Trinity is also evident in Wesley's affirmation of the Western filioque clause that affirmed a dual procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. At the Third Council of Toledo in 589, the specific language "and the Son" was added immediately after the words "the Holy Spirit . . . who proceeds from the Father" of the original Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed. In time, the language of the filioque clause was sung in Western churches, in the context of worship, since it not only celebrated the connection of the Son to the Spirit, but also suggested something of the ecstatic loving relations of the three persons in one God.^{[125](#)} Much later, as a part of the historic *Thirty-nine Articles*, the filioque clause was accepted by such English theologians as Richard Hooker, E. H. Browne, and John Pearson in their own theologies. In fact, Outler maintains that Wesley's own trinitarian doctrine "follows faithfully in the traditional Anglican line hewed out by Bishop John Pearson, of Chester."^{[126](#)}

For his part, Wesley substantiated the use of this Western clause, which the East even today considers an "innovation," by noting that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, as well as from the Father, "may be fairly argued, from his being called *the Spirit of Christ*, 1 Pet. i, 11; and from his being here said to be sent by Christ from the Father."^{[127](#)} Indeed, to argue otherwise, to fail to see the procession of the Spirit from both the Father and the Son, would unnecessarily separate the Son from the Spirit, with the result that the unity and harmony of the Godhead would be marred, a unity that was ever a concern of Western theologians. Wesley's position then was not simply a rallying point for his own theological tradition, but it represented his best judgment concerning some vital and difficult theological matters.

Wesley on Trinitarian Language

Though the traditional terminology of “Trinity” and “triune,”¹²⁸ going back to the early church fathers, clearly surfaces in Wesley's writings, his usual way of referring to the Christian Godhead is basically descriptive, not systematic, a way that keeps close to the biblical idiom. Thus, in his sermon “Christian Perfection,” Wesley maintains that “there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.”¹²⁹ Elsewhere, in a letter to Miss Ritchie in 1777, Wesley inquires: “Do you never lose your consciousness of the presence of the Three-One God? And is your testimony of His Spirit that you are saved from inward sin never obscured?”¹³⁰ And a few years later, in 1785 to be exact, Wesley depicts the coming eschatological renewal in his sermon “The New Creation” as a time when there will be “a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!”¹³¹

Wesley's preference for the raw, undeveloped biblical language in describing the Trinity is a reflection of his concern for the process of redemption viewed as a dynamic and transformative revelation of a God of holy love. That is, the name “Father” designates the origin of the revelation, the Son, the historic Mediator, and the Holy Spirit, the *present reality* of this revelation.¹³² As such, Wesley did not require adherence to the language of later councils and theologians that in his estimation represented a second-order construction. “I would insist only on the direct words unexplained, just as they lie in the text,” he writes; “‘There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.’”¹³³ Because of this concern for the language of scriptural Christianity, Wesley even took issue with those in his own day who wanted to make agreement with a specific creed the dividing line between the saved and lost: “I am far from saying, he who does not assent to this [the Athanasian Creed] ‘shall without doubt perish everlastingly.’”¹³⁴ Again, Wesley did not insist on the use of the term “Trinity” or even “Person,” for that matter, in referring to the Three/One, since they are not biblical words, though he immediately added: “I use them myself without any scruple, because I know of none better. But if any man has any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them?”¹³⁵ Nor was Wesley willing to execute a person, as Calvin's Geneva had done, for failing to employ this language that was unknown

in the first-century church: "I think them very good words [Trinity and Person]. But I should think it very hard to be burned alive for not using them; especially with a slow fire, made of moist, green wood!"¹³⁶ And though the irony of this ungodly action was lost on Calvin, who saw to it that Servetus was executed, it clearly was not lost on Wesley.

In employing the biblical language of Three/One God, Wesley was also reluctant to entertain the speculative question of just how this could be so, of how Three could indeed be One. Drawing an important distinction between the *fact* and the *manner* of the Three/One, Wesley observes in a letter to Miss March, composed in 1771, that "the mystery does not lie in the fact 'These Three are One,' but in the manner the accounting how they are one. But with this I have nothing to do. I believe the fact. As to the manner (wherein the whole mystery lies) I believe nothing about it."¹³⁷ And a few years later in his sermon "On the Trinity," Wesley once again affirms that God *as revealed* in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is Three and One. "But the *manner, how*, I do not comprehend; and I do not believe it."¹³⁸

Given this distinction between *fact* and *manner*, and his ongoing preference for a biblical idiom, Wesley was principally concerned with what theologians today call the "economic" Trinity, that is, God as revealed in the economy of salvation, along the *ordo salutis*, rather than with the "immanent" Trinity, the relations *within* the Christian Godhead, a topic that Wesley always deemed to be far too speculative. This approach, however, can be easily misunderstood as "anthropocentric" by those theologians who have identified the creedal *products* of the church as "theocentric" simply because such articulations give the appearance of considering God in God's self. However, the real tension here, in order to understand Wesley's practical theology aright, is not between "anthropocentric" and "theocentric," but between *biblical* and *traditional*, a tension that reflects Wesley's ongoing concern for the promotion of scriptural Christianity, whereby the truths of the biblical witness are actualized and confirmed in vital Christian experience through the work of the Three/One God. Put another way, the supposed "theocentric" approach, now viewed as a traditional one, goes beyond the biblical language to focus on the doctrinal reflections of the community of faith, a second-order activity, though an appeal, of course, is made to the superintendence of the Holy Spirit. In our judgment, then, Wesley kept the focus where it properly belonged: namely, on revelation and the activity of the Three/One God in fostering experimental divinity, the very substance of redemption.

For Wesley the truth of the distinct persons of Trinity is known in an active salvific process that occurs in the lives of some believers. In fact, Wesley was so impressed with Marquis de Renty's claim that he bore about him "an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever blessed Trinity,"¹³⁹ that he used this observation as a kind of standard by which he assessed the experience of the Methodists. Thus, while Wesley was preaching in Bristol in 1786, he observed one who could say with Monsieur de Renty, "I bear with me an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity."¹⁴⁰ Earlier, during the 1770s, Wesley had considered Christian experience in terms of this particular verification, but he indicated that such spiritual depth pertains not to babes but only to "fathers in Christ."¹⁴¹ Moreover, Wesley again suggested a correlation between the persons of the Trinity and the maturation of human spiritual experience when he observed in 1777 that Charles Perronet, a trusted friend, "was led at first to Jesus the Mediator. . . . Afterwards he had communion with the Father, next with the Spirit, and then with the whole Trinity."¹⁴²

Remarkably, at one time Wesley had actually believed that all those who were perfected in love would have the experience of the distinct persons of the Father, Son, and the Spirit in their souls and of the oneness of the Godhead, but he eventually changed his mind on this score. In 1787, for example, in a letter to Lady Maxwell, he points out: "Formerly I thought this was the experience of all those that were perfected in love; but I am now clearly convinced that it is not. Only a few of these are favoured with it."¹⁴³ So then, on the one hand, the experience of the distinct persons of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, as in the case of Charles Perronet, is apparently reserved only for the spiritually mature; on the other hand, not all who are perfected in love will enjoy such a gracious experience. For whatever reason, Wesley did not offer an explanation as to why some who were perfected in love enjoyed this experiential verity of the Trinity while others did not—other than, of course, by hinting, once again, at *divine freedom* and grace.

But the experimental verification of the *distinct persons* of the Three/One God, reserved for *some* of those perfected in love, must not be confused with the "normal" operations of the persons of the Christian Godhead in fostering the proper Christian faith. Thus, Wesley maintains that "knowledge of the Three-One God is interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion."¹⁴⁴ Even more emphatically he observes:

But I know not how anyone can be a Christian believer till "he hath" (as St. John

speaks) "the witness in himself"; till "the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God"—that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son—and having this witness he honours the Son and the blessed Spirit "even as he honours the Father."[145](#)

The Trinity and the Language of Holy Love

Focusing on the economic Trinity of how God/Father is revealed to believers in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, Wesley explored the dynamics of this revelation, whereby believing hearts are transformed in the very process of *receiving* salvific graces and then responding in a rhythm of holy love. So understood, the Spirit of adoption is a filial one that marks believers as the "beloved" of the Father in the Son, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father." Caught up in a relation with the One who has called them forth to be joined to the body of Christ, the sons and daughters of God have received the glorious presence of the Spirit of God, a presence that is an invitation to participate more deeply in the divine life of love, a love that is distinct in both its purity and beauty and that is evident in the gracious liberties of the gospel: freedom from the guilt, power, and ultimately from the very being of sin.

For Wesley, then, his doctrine of the Three/One God is not an arcane, speculative, impractical teaching; neither is it to be confused with mere doctrinal construction or assent that can leave the self unaddressed and very much at the center of its own life. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit, through the Word, calls believers forth to participate in a life they have hitherto not known: a life of holy love. And it is precisely Wesley's unswerving focus on God as revealed *to us* and *for us* that suggests the Most High should also be understood as a verb, as an action Word, in a dynamic, personal, and participatory way and not simply as a noun. "Glory be to thee, O holy, undivided Trinity, for jointly concurring in the great work of our redemption, and restoring us again to the glorious ¹⁴⁶ Wesley exclaims. That is, the Father purposes redemption; the Son comes to us, dies, and rises, and the Holy Spirit attests to and inculcates the truth that is Christ, restoring the image of God in fallen humanity. Wesley's dynamic understanding of God, then, is mirrored in the participatory processes of human salvation in which calling, revealing, transforming, and redeeming graces are all intimately related. Indeed, for Wesley, there is no transforming apart from revealing and no redeeming apart from transforming. The correlation between the work of God (as a reflection of the divine being), in terms of the roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the process of human redemption itself (in increasing transformation) suggests that in the end, the redeemed will be "Transcripts of the Trinity,"¹⁴⁷ written emblems of glory, reflecting nothing less the resplendent holy love in

which they were created.

Today and Tomorrow: The Rise of Pentecostal Religion

Charles Fox Parham, who was licensed to preach by the Methodist Episcopal Church, left that communion of faith in 1894 in order to preach a holiness message that included divine healing, entire sanctification as a second work of grace, and a third blessing of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. One of Parham's students, Agnes Ozman, began speaking in tongues, as evidence of this baptism, on the first day of the twentieth century, January 1, 1901. A few years later, in 1905, Parham opened a Bible school in Houston, where a black holiness preacher, William J. Seymour, profited from his teacher's doctrine, took it to Los Angeles, and helped launch the Azusa Street Revival that swelled the following year, a revival in which speaking in tongues (glossolalia) was in abundance.

In this brief recounting of the rise of Pentecostalism, its Wesleyan roots are clearly evident. But some scholars maintain that these roots actually go much deeper, well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the father of Methodism himself and to the movements he had spawned on both sides of the Atlantic. To illustrate, Steven Land, a Pentecostal scholar, claims that "had there been no eighteenth-century Wesleyan and nineteenth-century holiness movements there would have been no twentieth-century Pentecostalism."¹⁴⁸ In this view, Pentecostals identified with "the proletarian masses of people who had joined the more radical Holiness groups," at the beginning of the twentieth century and thereby suffused this movement with a number of Pentecostal emphases.¹⁴⁹

Donald Dayton, noted holiness scholar, recounts a similar narrative, though he lifts up the period immediately following the Civil War to point out that the holiness movement at this time increasingly adopted a "Pentecostal formulation of entire sanctification."¹⁵⁰ In this interpretation, the lineage of Pentecostalism is to be traced through "the nineteenth-century Holiness traditions and more indirectly back to themes of Methodism and perhaps even to Pietism and Puritanism."¹⁵¹ And in his own work, Melvin Dieter discerns a "growing Pentecostal primitivism"¹⁵² that moved through American revivalism in which Spirit Baptism and Pentecostal motifs and language "increasingly interlaced the Wesleyan/Higher-Life interdenominational network."¹⁵³ This influence was due in part to the widespread familiarity with the work of John Fletcher, theologian

and close friend of Wesley's, especially his emphasis on the connection between Pentecostal imagery and Spirit baptism, a point developed extensively in a more recent treatment by Laurence Wood.¹⁵⁴ And for his part, Vincent Synan contends for a similar thesis, that "the historical and doctrinal lineage of American Pentecostalism is to be found in the Wesleyan tradition."¹⁵⁵

The rise of Pentecostalism, in terms of the Wesleyan heritage and the revivalism that preceded it, was marked by a number of reforming impulses. Thus, in a manner similar to Wesley, American Pentecostalism developed a historiography, a way of interpreting the history of the church, that placed an emphasis on vital scriptural Christianity. Not content simply with the form of religion (which was more than enough religion for the rich and the more settled upper middle classes), Pentecostals hungered after the power thereof. Like Wesley himself, Land marks a serious decline in the church with the rise of Constantine when pride, pomp, and power began to edge out the proper Christian faith that is always actualized in the context of various degrees of rejection and suffering.¹⁵⁶ This falling away of a popular and increasingly worldly Christianity was challenged by a number of prophets such that "the crises of Luther (justification), Wesley (sanctification) and Pentecostalism (Spirit filling), led to necessary and unavoidable reforms."¹⁵⁷ Seeking to recover the vibrant life and unity of Pentecost itself, what some call the early rain of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism emerged as the "latter rain," that is, as the time when a special outpouring of the Spirit was manifested, replete with gifts and graces, so that the church might be equipped for the harvest time of the coming reign of Christ.¹⁵⁸

At times Pentecostalism has been termed a "third force" within American religion, due to its pietistic tendencies,¹⁵⁹ though some scholars prefer the designation "fourth force," in order to distinguish this vital religion from Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and even Protestantism itself.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, because the Pentecostal fellowship of North America employs the statement of faith of the National Association of Evangelicals in a slightly expanded form,¹⁶¹ most demographers, George Gallup included, consider Pentecostalism to be a species of evangelical Protestantism. Like American evangelicals, Pentecostals have stressed the importance of the authority of Scripture, the crucial nature of the atoning work of Christ, the necessity of conversion, and the imperative of evangelism. Again, like evangelicalism, Pentecostals at the beginning of the twentieth century were a part of the "proletarian masses of people,"¹⁶² who when

faced with the choice of identifying with liberal, social gospel activism that by and large neglected the life of the soul, or with vibrant, spirit-filled conservative variants, always chose the later.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, Pentecostalism today unites what an earlier age had divided and is actually one of the most socially active and spirit-filled forms of Christianity in the world.

With its emphasis on the active role of the Holy Spirit in personal life, in a way similar to Wesley's doctrines of regeneration and the direct witness of the Spirit, Pentecostalism has stressed the powers of the age to come that have already been received as a foretaste among the faithful. Such enabling grace is not only manifested in the fruit of the Spirit and various chrisms, but also leads to a soteriological optimism in which victory is pronounced, a victory that is ever attractive to the poor and lowly in spirit. Rejecting the incremental, gradualistic doctrines of salvation that make no, or little, room for crisis or for the in-breaking of the heavenly powers that can bring deliverance *today*, Land observes:

For the Wesleyan Pentecostals power was to be upon and for the sanctified life; thus to turn sanctification into something practically identical to regeneration followed by mere growth was to lose the specificity, dynamic and eventfulness of the Wesleyan teaching. Growth without crises was not only uninspiring, it was dangerous, for it undercut the hope of real and definite transformations.¹⁶⁴

It is precisely this message of liberty—freedom not only from earthly oppressors but also from spiritual ones, that is, from the sinful powers and dominions that corrupt and hold down the human spirit—that has been embraced by the poor and the oppressed, those who know their need perhaps best of all. Given these dynamics, it is not surprising to learn that Pentecostalism has proved especially attractive to African Americans and that, in terms of its worldwide distribution, Pentecostalism has a "black and brown majority in its constituency."¹⁶⁵ And though this emergent religion, especially in its Wesleyan forms, is well represented among the poor and working classes, nevertheless, it, too, has failed to reach the truly indigent, a population that sociologists call the underclass,¹⁶⁶ and one that remains stubbornly unchurched.

With a strong missionary impulse, Pentecostalism has thrived as an indigenized folk religion in Latin and South America, Indonesia, and Africa. As Harvey Cox has maintained in his book *Fire from Heaven*, the expansion throughout the Southern Hemisphere has been so extraordinary that a new reformation may actually be underway. More to the point, not only are one-quarter of all full-time Christian workers in the world today

Pentecostal/charismatic,¹⁶⁷ but also "over a half-million Brazilians are leaving the Catholic church for evangelical [Pentecostal] churches *each year*."¹⁶⁸ Simply put, "Latin America is becoming Protestant more rapidly than central Europe did in the sixteenth century."¹⁶⁹ And according to one study, "Three out of five evangelicals in Latin America are Pentecostal."¹⁷⁰

The very success of Pentecostalism, its broad appeal to the poor and to the spiritually hungry, has created significant problems for this Spirit-led movement, especially in terms of Roman Catholic opposition—especially in Latin America. Sensing that its hold upon the population in countries such as Guatemala and Brazil is quickly slipping away, the Roman Catholic Church has repeatedly criticized evangelical Protestantism, Pentecostalism in particular, "with paid ads, street marches, and sermons denouncing *los evangélicos*."¹⁷¹ According to Stoll, Catholic bishops now warn of "an invasion of the sects coordinated from Washington."¹⁷² And even the late John Paul II responded in a decidedly unecumenical fashion and warned the Latin American bishops' conference about these "ravenous wolves."¹⁷³ Not content with this, the bishop of Rome then went on to complain that "evangelicals [and Pentecostals] are spreading 'like an oil stain,' in the region,"¹⁷⁴ hardly an apt description for a movement of the Holy Spirit. However, complain as it may, the Roman Catholic Church is virtually powerless to check this vital movement of scriptural Christianity that has won the hearts and minds of so many of the dispossessed. To be sure, Guatemala already has more Pentecostals than Roman Catholics; and in thirty years from now, "half a dozen Latin American countries will have a Pentecostal majority."¹⁷⁵ And according to Jenkins in his work *The Next Christendom*, though Pentecostals were only a handful in 1900, and constitute several hundred million today, "the number of Pentecostal believers should surpass the one billion mark before 2050."¹⁷⁶

In light of the careful work of recent pollsters and demographers, it is clear that the Christian faith is being manifested in new forms in the twenty-first century that place a premium on the empowering activity of the Holy Spirit in both personal and corporate life. From our reading of this data, this is an extraordinarily opportune time to forge significant conversations between the Methodist, Wesleyan, holiness, and Pentecostal churches that all look to the legacy of John Wesley not only for direction but also for spiritual vitality. Unconventional in many respects (as is Pentecostalism), John Wesley violated parish boundaries, employed lay preachers, and proclaimed a message of good

news to the poor that offered them genuine hope *today*—all of which resulted in censure from a more "settled" clergy who were more than comfortable with the way things were. In this sense, as vital and fresh movements of the Spirit, both eighteenth-century Methodism and modern Pentecostalism are often viewed as "disruptive." But such a designation, though intended in a negative way, may actually be a positive expression of the genius of these movements. That is, they challenge the powers that be, break up the soil, so to speak, to make way for new life and genuine liberation, the life of a heart set free in the grace of the Spirit and in deeply healing, satisfying love.

Chapter Five

Justification:

The God of Holy Love for Us

Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three, that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third is religion itself.

—Rupert E. Davies, *The Works of John Wesley. The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 9:227.

The order of salvation that Wesley articulated, modified, and sharpened throughout the years was not amorphous, lacking structure and specificity, but devolved upon two principal points of attention. Indeed, the two foci of justification and entire sanctification, and their attendant doctrines, not only reveal a distinction between the juridical and the participatory, the work that God does *for us* and *in us*, but also display Wesley's different understandings of grace informed by a broad catholicity as well as by insights from the Reformation. Attentiveness to these different conceptions of grace and their outworking along the *ordo salutis* will go a long way in illuminating the flow of redemption, as Wesley understood it, in terms of both divine and human working.

Co-operant Grace (Catholic Emphasis)

One of Wesley's more well-developed ways of understanding grace, and one that is imbedded in the very structure of the *ordo salutis* in a graphic way, is in terms of divine and human co-operation: "God worketh in you; therefore you can work. . . . God worketh in you; therefore you *must* work."¹ Lest this maxim be interpreted simply in a synergistic, nearly semi-Pelagian way, it must be immediately noted that a broad prevenience richly informs such a divine and human co-operation. In other words, for Wesley, the *initiative*, the first movement in the reality of redemption, is *always* taken by God. Thus, the grace of God ever precedes us, demonstrating once again the favor and goodness of the Most High as well as, in this context, the empowerment and imperative that such grace affords.

Repentance

When the cluster of doctrines associated with justification (such as conviction, repentance, and works suitable for repentance) is considered, it is grace in this first sense of divine and human co-operation, informed by the prevenient activity of God (responsible grace) that is preeminent. Such divine/human co-operation, developed in the writings of several early church fathers, prepares the sinner in some sense, if there be time and opportunity, to receive the gift of justification itself. Having been convicted by the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the moral law, a point developed in the previous chapter, sinners are open to the renewal of the deeper graces of God. This emphasis on activity *prior* to justification—in which repentance is viewed as flowing out of prevenient and convincing grace, and not as a result of justification itself—distinguished the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* in some important respects from both its Lutheran and Reformed counterparts.²

So important was the proper teaching of repentance for Wesley that he referred to it as one of "our main doctrines."³ However, repentance, valuable as it is, is neither the door of religion nor religion itself, but simply "the porch of religion."⁴ In an early manuscript sermon "Hypocrisy in Oxford," produced in 1741, Wesley displays the many elements that constitute initial or legal repentance on the way to justification. He writes:

Now repentance is not one work alone, but is, as it were, a collection of many others, for in its compass the following works are comprehended: (1) sorrow on account of sin; (2) humiliation under the hand of God; (3) hatred to sin; (4) confession of sin; (5) ardent supplication of the divine mercy; (6) the love of God; (7) ceasing from sin; (8) firm purpose of new obedience; (9) restitution of ill-gotten goods; (10) forgiving our neighbour his transgressions against us; (11) works of beneficence, or almsgiving.⁵ Compare this with the description found in *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*, written five years later, in which Wesley reveals that repentance goes far beyond mere conviction of sin: First, by repentance you mean only conviction of sin. But this is a very partial account of it. Every child that has learned his catechism can tell that forsaking of sin is also included in it; . . . living in obedience to God's will, when there is opportunity; and even when there is not, a sincere desire and purpose to do so, . . . and a faith in God's mercies through Christ Jesus.⁶

Though Wesley certainly did not repudiate any of the elements of the preceding descriptions, he tended to focus on three principal aspects of repentance, namely, (a) conviction or self-knowledge, (b) poverty of spirit, and (c) rejection of self-righteousness and self-justification.

Works Suitable for Repentance

Though repentance as a deep work of grace naturally includes the tempers and affections of the heart, it is not simply an interior work, a change in heart and resolve. For in the same breath that John Wesley spoke of repentance, he also spoke of "works meet (suitable) for repentance," which are nothing less than outward expressions of inward contrition and grace. And in his treatise *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, produced in 1745, Wesley defined these works as follows: "By 'fruits meet for repentance' [I mean] forgiving our brother, ceasing from evil, doing good, using the ordinances of God, and in general obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received."⁷

Observe that the first of these elements of works suitable for repentance, that is, "forgiving our brother," is logically entailed in the activity of repentance itself. In other words, it is both unreasonable and uncharitable to expect forgiveness from the hand of a loving God when we stubbornly refuse to forgive our neighbor. The next three elements, however, "ceasing from evil, doing good, and using the ordinances of God," form a structural triad for Wesley and are duplicated elsewhere and in different contexts. For example, this triad emerged in the deliberations of the first Methodist conference in 1744⁸ as well as in 1785 when Wesley detailed, in an important sermon, just what it means "to work out our own salvation."⁹ Moreover, when he crafted the piece *The Nature, Design, and the General Rules of the United Societies* in 1743, Wesley used these same three elements as the principal rules to guide the societies.¹⁰ This fact demonstrates quite clearly that the very design and purpose of the Methodist societies was one of repentance, of preparing sinners to "flee from the wrath to come."¹¹

Taking each one of the elements of the triad in particular, we note that by "ceasing from evil," Wesley had in mind avoiding such things as taking the name of God in vain, profaning the Sabbath, drunkenness, fighting, uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, and laying up treasures upon the earth, to name a few.¹² "By doing good," he meant that the sincerely repentant should undertake works of mercy as they await the sanctifying grace of God by clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, and visiting the sick and those who are in prison. And last, by the phrase "using the ordinances of God," Wesley

emphasized the value of the means of grace such as prayer, reading the Bible, and receiving the Lord's Supper.¹³ Moreover, since the means of grace are, to use Wesley's own words, "outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace," they are ever crucial to the spiritual progress of the newly repentant sinner.

The last element of obeying God "according to the measure of grace which [we have] received"¹⁴ demonstrates that repentance and its fruits constitute a genuine response to the convincing grace of God, a response that precludes, however, any notion of human merit. Observe the two aspects present in this divine/human cooperation: On the one hand, there is vigorous human activity as the newly repentant ones obey God; on the other hand, this obedience and labor is ever preceded and empowered by the convincing grace of God, "according to the measure of grace which we have received." Both movements are vital and are descriptive of Wesley's theological posture.

The Necessity of Repentance and Works Suitable Thereto

The question of the necessity and relative importance of repentance and its fruits is one area of Wesley's doctrine of salvation that underwent considerable change and was informed by key insights from the Reformation. For example, in his first university sermon, "Salvation by Faith," which was preached at St. Mary's, Oxford University, shortly after his own justification and regeneration in 1738, Wesley gives evidence of a Moravian-Lutheran notion of works prior to justifying faith. These works, according to Wesley, are "all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement."¹⁵ Elsewhere, in this same sermon, the young Anglican cleric affirms that "all our works, all our righteousness, which were before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation."¹⁶

However, by the time of the first Methodist Conference in 1744, much had changed. Those assembled at this historic meeting raised the question, "But must not repentance, and works meet for repentance, go before this [justifying] faith?"¹⁷ To which it was replied:

Without doubt; if by repentance you mean conviction of sin; and by works meet for repentance, obeying God as far as we can, forgiving our brother, leaving off from evil, doing good, and using his ordinances, according to the power we have received.¹⁸

Wesley develops and thereby improves the distinctions present in the Minutes of 1744 in his treatise *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* written the following year. In this piece, he reasons:

And yet I allow you this, that although both repentance and the fruits thereof are in *some sense* necessary before justification, yet neither the one nor the other is necessary in the *same sense* or in the *same degree* with faith. Not in the *same degree*: for in whatever moment a man believes (in the Christian sense of the word) he is justified, his sins are blotted out, "his faith is counted to him for righteousness." . . . Faith alone therefore justifies, which repentance alone does not, much less any outward work. And consequently none of these are necessary to justification in the *same degree* with faith.

Nor in the *same sense*: for none of these has so direct, immediate a relation to justification as faith. This is *proximately* necessary thereto; repentance, *remotely*,

as it is necessary to the increase or continuance of faith: and the fruits of repentance still more remotely, as they are necessary to repentance.¹⁹

The distinctions "not in the same sense" and "not in the same degree," noted above, carry many of the nuances used by Wesley to articulate, on the one hand, the *necessity* of repentance and its fruits prior to justification

and, on the other hand, that repentance and its fruits do *not* justify. So understood, the former emphasis is indicative of Wesley's broadly catholic, co-operant understanding of grace, in that the prevenient favor of God ever goes before and thereby informs such working. In this setting, the term "catholic" does not mean Roman Catholic but refers to the universality of the witness of the church so evident in the writings of the church fathers before the Council of Nicaea. The latter emphasis, however, is expressive of his Reformation understanding of grace, highlighting the divine role, in that faith *alone* justifies. This sophisticated teaching that embraces two distinct theological emphases in Wesley's theology, evidencing a crucial and ongoing conjunction, can be expressed in the following chart:

Distinctions Pertaining to Repentance, Works, and Faith	
Not in the Same Sense	Not in the Same Degree
Repentance Is Remotely Necessary	Repentance Does Not Justify
Fruits Even More Remotely So	Fruits Do Not Justify
Faith is Directly (Proximately) Necessary	Faith Alone Justifies
Co-operant (Responsible) Grace	Free Grace
Catholic Emphasis	Protestant Emphasis

Free Grace (Protestant Emphasis)

Though Wesley rarely used the phrase "sovereign grace,"²⁰ probably because he believed it would be misunderstood given his controversy with several Calvinists, he nevertheless embraced many (though obviously not all) of the leading ideas that inform this terminology. Thus, for example, in his sermon "Free Grace," produced in 1739 as a counterpoise to some of the Calvinist excesses, Wesley nevertheless agrees on one level with his detractors that the grace from which salvation comes is "free in all," meaning that it "does not depend on any power or merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole, nor in part."²¹ Simply put, the grace of the Most High is free; it is an utter gift of a God of holy love.

Beyond excluding merit, Wesley also rejected all human working as the *basis* upon which free grace is received. Accordingly, God's free justifying grace "does not in any wise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has done, or anything he is."²² Again, "it does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions," Wesley reasons, "for all these flow from the free grace of God. They are the streams only, not the fountain."²³ Thomas C. Oden expressed this truth succinctly in his observation, "Sin remains our own work; free grace God's."²⁴ By excluding both human working as well as the notion that sinners must be something other than they are before they can be justified, Wesley maintained that justifying grace is not a species of co-operant or responsible grace, but of free grace in the sense that justification is not a human possibility at all, but represents the work of God *alone*. Put another way, the language of "alone" (the Latin *sola*) is preeminent here and highlights the divine working in the face of human impotence. And this *sola* language, a rich inheritance from the Protestant reformers, is also evident in Wesley's treatise *Predestination Calmly Considered*, in which he observes:

If then you say, "We ascribe to God alone the whole glory of our salvation;" I answer, So do we too. If you add, "Nay, but we affirm, that God alone does the whole work, without man's working at all;" in one sense, we allow this also. We allow, it is the work of God *alone* to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify; which three comprehend the whole of salvation.²⁵

To be sure, Wesley underscored the free, sovereign action of God in several places throughout his writings. To illustrate, in 1760, in a letter to Dorothy Furly,

a woman who was somewhat impatient with her own spiritual progress, Wesley counseled her by pointing out that "God is Sovereign, in sanctifying as well as justifying. He will act when as well as how He pleases; and none can say unto him, What doest Thou?"²⁶ In other words, the timetable, so to speak, is ever in God's hands, not in our own. People can be redeemed if they will (Arminian emphasis), but not when they will. Wesley explains in a letter drafted in 1777: To say every man can believe to justification or sanctification *when* he will is contrary to plain matter of fact. . . . That every man may believe if he will I earnestly maintain, and yet that he can believe when he will I totally deny. *But there will be always something in the matter which we cannot well comprehend or explain.*²⁷

Beyond this, Wesley noted in letter to Miss March, drafted in 1771, that "the dealings of God with man are infinitely varied, and cannot be confined to any general rule; both in justification and sanctification He often acts in a manner we cannot account for."²⁸ Such observations clearly reveal that the Holy One is free in terms of giving justifying and entirely sanctifying graces and is not obligated by human merit or by prior cooperation in the way that some synergistic paradigms seem to suggest. The following table then summarizes the leading themes of free grace as they played out in Wesley's practical theology:

Free Grace

- Excludes human merit.
- Highlights the divine role in redemption, and corresponds to those aspect of the *ordo salutis* (that is, justification and entire sanctification) that are the work of God *alone*.
 - Corresponds to Wesley's use of the *sola* language of "alone" and "only" ("it is the work of God *alone* to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify").
 - Demonstrates that the fruits of free grace are not given on the *basis* of a prior co-operation (as in some synergistic models) but are given *freely* by a holy, merciful, and loving God.
 - Reveals that sinners do not have to *be* or *do* something first *in order* to be justified; or Christians to be entirely sanctified (a point to be developed in chapter 8).
 - Underscores the sheer gratuity of grace.
 - Different from a Calvinist understanding in that such grace is not irresistible; God's free gifts can be rejected.
 - Represents Wesley's "Protestant" understanding of grace.

One of the reasons that the notion of free grace has not been fully appreciated as an important window on Wesley's practical theology, and one that explains the giftedness of both justification and entire sanctification as distinct graces, is that the two distinct senses of "working" that are evident in Wesley's theology have been conflated and then subsumed under a broad and encompassing synergistic, cooperant paradigm. To illustrate, working in the first sense, such as responding to the convincing grace of God in works suitable for repentance, is indeed understood in a synergistic context of divine initiative and human response that leads to further growth in grace. Such working, in other words, describes the *normal course* of growth and maturation as one awaits the extraordinary gifts (emphasized as the two foci of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*) of both justification and entire sanctification. Working in the second sense, however, is much different from the first and is not part of a synergistic context of divine and human working but underscores the activity of God *alone*. That is, before responding or co-operating, there must first of all be a rich *receiving*—*almost* in a passive way. That is, such working, as in extending the hand to receive the gift of justification or entire sanctification, is hardly a "work" at all but is affirmed by Wesley precisely because it keeps the integrity and the freedom of the person in place. That is, such a conception eliminates the deterministic notions of irresistible saving grace that were found among some of the Calvinists. It is, therefore, best understood not in the context of cooperant grace but of free grace, a freedom that takes into account the personhood of seekers in that they must receive and be open to the good gifts of a God of holy love. And such gifts according to Wesley could, of course, be rejected.

Though there is no hard evidence that Wesley ever read Arminius, it is nevertheless likely that he had done so given his observation in the piece "What Is an Arminian," in which he points out: "And how can any man know what Arminius held, who has never read one page of his writings?"²⁹ Despite this influence, it is probably not the case that Wesley came to his own judgments on divine and human working in the process of redemption by keeping a constant eye on the conclusions of Arminius. For though both leaders clearly agreed on the loving nature of God and the grace-restored freedom of humanity (though Outler discerned a slight difference on this last point), it is far more likely that Wesley himself, knowing the history of the church as he did, looked to the broader tradition of the body of Christ (the contributions of Latin and Eastern Fathers, Protestant Reformers, Puritans, Pietists, and Anglicans as well) as he

reflected on these salient issues.

Moreover, Wesley at times assessed the worth of the monergistic and synergistic paradigms in a way slightly different from Arminius.³⁰ That is, drawing on a similar kind of distinction that he had employed in terms of the issue of faith and works ("not in the same sense"), Wesley maintained that the monergistic reading (that is, the work of God alone) *in one sense* is accurate. Recall the language cited earlier: " 'Nay, but we affirm, that God alone does the whole work, without man's working at all'; *in one sense*, we allow this also. We allow, it is the work of God *alone* to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify; which three comprehend the whole of salvation."³¹ In other words, Wesley intentionally sought to avoid the contradiction of affirming the monergistic and synergistic paradigms simultaneously by offering a distinction, a carefully thought-out qualification that was so very typical of his "third way" theological style. But this observation also means (and this is what has been missed by those who read Wesley utterly in a synergistic way) that Wesley did indeed think it appropriate to affirm the monergistic view at least *in one sense* because he recognized it carried meanings that are ever crucial to the proclamation of the gospel aright.

If, however, a nearly exclusive synergistic reading of Wesley's doctrine of salvation is offered (the "catholic" paradigm) and is drawn too tightly, neglecting the insights of the Protestant reformers, especially in terms of the sheer gratuity of grace, then the divine freedom itself will at least be misunderstood and possibly eclipsed. In this reckoning, once the initial or prevenient action of the Most High occurs, then God is virtually limited to responding merely to human *response*. But Wesley, as with Luther and Calvin, understood quite well that God is remarkably gracious and at times acts alone in the face of human impotence, for not only is justification not a human work but also this gift of grace is not given on the *basis* of a prior working.

So then, as noted earlier, the conjunctive *style* of Wesley's theology is not, after all, fully or aptly expressed in the divine and human roles found in an overarching synergistic paradigm *even if the stress is on divine initiative* (as in the model of responsible grace) for this is to privilege, once again, merely the "catholic" Wesley. On the contrary, more accurate readings suggest that a synergistic paradigm, which contains both divine and human acting, must itself be caught up in an *even larger conjunction* in which the protestant emphasis on the sole activity of God, apart from all human working, is *equally* factored in—not simply co-operant or responsible grace, but the conjunction of responsible

and free grace, the union of both a catholic and a protestant emphasis. The following chart illustrates the different conceptions of grace.

	Divine Working	Human Working	Divine Initiative	Work of God Alone
Co-operant Grace	X	X	Not Necessarily So	
Responsible Grace	X	X	X	
Free Grace	X	<i>Receiving</i> what is in a real sense an utter gift; hardly a work at all.	X	X

Justifying Faith

In looking back on his theological journey, Wesley noted in 1772 that he "did not clearly see that we 'are saved by faith' till the year 1738."³² During that crucial year, which Outler refers to as Wesley's *annus mirabilis*,³³ Peter Böhler, a young Moravian, disabused Wesley of his "philosophy" by drawing on the insights of the Reformation in general and of Pietists in particular and rightly pointed out the two fruits that ever accompany saving faith: *peace* that flows out of a sense of forgiveness (justification) and *power* that issues from the regenerating presence of the Holy Spirit (regeneration).

Given Wesley's early and repeated misunderstandings of the *nature* of faith, it is not surprising to learn that he labored over the essence of justifying faith in his writings. In his sermon "Salvation by Faith," for instance, which was preached days after his Aldersgate experience, Wesley entertains the question, "What faith it is through which we are saved."³⁴ And he, at least initially, answers this question along the lines of a *via negativa*, that is, he informs his listeners what faith is *not* precisely in order that they may gain a greater appreciation of what it is. And saving faith is, first of all, not simply the faith of a heathen. The faith that justifies goes beyond the mere belief that God exists and that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."³⁵ It also surpasses the knowledge of the being and attributes of God and a vigorous practice of moral virtue. In addition, it exceeds glorifying God by giving thanks for all good things. All of this, as noble as it may seem, is simply the faith of a Greek or a Roman, the faith of a heathen.³⁶ It cannot justify.

Second, the faith through which one is saved is not that of a devil. According to Wesley, devils believe that "there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward and just to punish."³⁷ They also believe that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God."³⁸ And so mere assent to all that is contained in the Bible, likewise, does not redeem. But the faith of a devil goes even beyond this to affirm, quite interestingly, that Jesus is the Son of God, even the Christ. Why, then, does not this latter faith save? Because, once again, it is cold and speculative; it never engages the heart, the very depth of one's being. Wesley probably reasoned along these lines: these evil spirits, being the great enemies of the Most High that they are, tremble in believing. They know that they are out of harmony with the divine order and that someday they will be judged. Their faith

is, therefore, utterly encased in fear. They neither love this God they know, nor are they willing to submit to the divine rule, and they have none of the holy tempers that characterize vital faith.

Third, to take this one step higher, justifying faith is not merely that which the apostles had while Christ was upon the earth. Thus, Wesley maintains that even though the apostles left all to follow Jesus, heal the sick, and cast out devils, they were yet referred to by Christ as "a faithless generation."³⁹ How is this teaching to be understood? In a real sense, Wesley sees the apostles as transitional figures whose experience was unique, for they believed in Christ both before and after his death and resurrection. And it is precisely this former faith of the apostles that is inferior to the faith of later Christians who are able to acknowledge the necessity and merit of Christ's death and the power of his resurrection. In short, the prerogatives of the latter far exceed those of the former.

If justifying faith, then, is neither simply belief in the existence of God, nor the practice of moral virtue, nor an assent to all that the Scriptures contain, nor the knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, nor even the faith of the apostles when Jesus was on earth, then what precisely is it? This litany of what faith is not, offered by Wesley, illuminates many of the false starts and dead ends (some of which dominated his own thinking at one time or other) that he wished to spare his hearers, and it is, therefore, not without its purpose: it prepares the way for a consideration of what, in fact, vital faith is.

The faith through which salvation is received is, first of all, "faith in Christ—Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper object of it."⁴⁰ And this is what distinguishes it from the faith of a heathen. Indeed, Wesley confesses in his brief spiritual autobiography recounted in the preface to the description of his Aldersgate experience that earlier he did not fix this faith on its proper object; then he meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ.⁴¹ "Again, I knew not that I was *wholly void of this faith*," Wesley writes, "but only thought *I had not enough* of it."⁴² In fact, eight years later, in 1746, Wesley attributed the success of the revival, at least in part, to this new focus:

From 1738 to this time—speaking continually of Jesus Christ; laying Him only for the foundation of the whole building, making Him all in all, the first and the last; preaching only on this plan, "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel,"—the "word of God ran" as fire among the stubble.⁴³

Second, justifying faith is different from that of a devil in that "it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a 'disposition of the heart.'"⁴⁴ Notice here that Wesley does not exclude

an intellectual component to faith; he simply points out that this ingredient, by itself, is insufficient; it must be joined to a disposition of the heart. That is, the mind must inform the heart, and the heart must engage the mind; it is "both/and," not "either/or." Indeed, Wesley realized that sinners receive the justifying grace of God, not merely as intellects, but as per sons; they receive it, in other words, with their whole being.

And last, justifying faith goes beyond that of the apostles while Christ was on earth, in that "it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection."⁴⁵ This faith, then, looks to the death of Christ as the only sufficient means of redeeming humanity from eternal death and to his resurrection as the remedy for restoring humanity to life and immortality.⁴⁶ In Wesley's own words, Christian faith is composed of the following:

Not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as *given for us*, and *living in us*. It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ *his* sins are forgiven, and *he* reconciled to the favour of God.⁴⁷

Not surprising, after 1738, Wesley continually defines faith in terms of both assent *and* trust. Once acquired, then, this is an understanding that does not drop out. For example, in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, written in 1743, Wesley points out that "the right and true Christian faith is, not only to believe the Holy Scriptures and the articles of our faith are true; but also to have a sure *trust* and *confidence* . . . to be saved from everlasting damnation through Christ."⁴⁸ And a few years later in his "Way to the Kingdom," Wesley cautions his readers against conceiving faith as a bare assent to the Bible.⁴⁹ Moreover, in his sermon "Of the Church," produced in 1785, the elderly Wesley recounts the same *via negativa* (not the faith of a heathen, devil, and so on) found in his early sermon "Salvation by Faith." The continuity is striking.

One difference that does emerge, however, in Wesley's later writings is that he takes great pains to portray the nature of faith as a spiritual sense. Denying the reality of innate ideas and developing an empiricist epistemology, Wesley draws a relation between natural senses on the one hand and spiritual senses on the other. That is, just as sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell are natural senses, so is faith a sense—a spiritual sense. For example, in a letter to Mary Bishop in 1770, Wesley defines faith chiefly as spiritual sight: "It is light," he states, "and not darkness."⁵⁰ Moreover, in his *Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*, produced in 1746, he states: "Faith in general is a divine supernatural *elegchos*

(evidence, or conviction) of things not seen, not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual."⁵¹ So understood, faith is broadly defined as "that evidence, that conviction, that demonstration of things invisible, whereby the eyes of our understanding [are] being opened, and divine light [pours] in upon them."⁵² Elsewhere, in his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," Wesley elaborates: "Faith is a *divine evidence* and *conviction*, not only that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,' but also that Christ 'loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.' It is by this faith . . . that we 'receive Christ'; that we receive him in all his offices as our Prophet, Priest, and King."⁵³ The key point, however, is that faith discerns not a natural object, but a spiritual one.

In summary, then, justifying faith embraces several vital factors: on a notional level, it entails an *assent* to the truth revealed in Scripture that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; on a personal level, it includes a hearty trust (*fiducia*) in the person and work of Christ; and on a sensate or experiential level, it embraces a trust that is nothing less than a supernatural work, a "divine evidence and conviction" that Christ "loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." Consequently, justifying faith cannot be conceived in any full sense either apart from the redemptive nature of the life, death, and ministry of Jesus Christ, or apart from the experiential trust and conviction graciously received by the believer through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in 1787, in a letter to Theophilus Lesser, Wesley highlights the distinctiveness of Christian faith and writes: "To believe the being and attributes of God is the faith of an heathen. To believe the Old Testament and trust in Him that was to come was the faith of a Jew. To believe Christ gave Himself *for me* is the faith of a Christian."⁵⁴ Observe that the "*for me*" language here was drawn from Luther himself, of whom Wesley wrote, indicating something of his debt, "Who has wrote more ably than Martin Luther on justification by faith alone?"⁵⁵

Justification Itself: The First Focus of the Wesleyan Order of Salvation

As Wesley, by his own admission, was ignorant of the nature of justifying *faith* prior to 1738, so, too, was he ignorant of the *nature* of justification. And his breakthrough concerning the essential nature of justification also came in 1738 as evidenced by his comment to John Newton in 1765: "I think on Justification just as I have done any time these seven-and-twenty years, and just as Mr. Calvin does. In this respect I do not differ from him a hair's breadth."⁵⁶ But before 1738, Wesley had often confused justification with sanctification; that is, he often considered the holy life with its works of piety and mercy as the basis of justification instead of as its fruit. In a real sense, Wesley was predisposed to such thinking by the understanding and practice of his own Anglican Church.⁵⁷ For example, in 1730, Wesley wrote to his mother that what he had liked in Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Rules for Holy Dying* was his "account of the pardon of sins which is the clearest I ever met with: 'Pardon of sins in the gospel is sanctification.'"⁵⁸ Moreover, in a letter to William Green in 1789, Wesley observes that the habit of the English clergy is to place sanctification before justification, with the result that the holy life becomes the basis upon which one is justified.⁵⁹ That Wesley made this same kind of error as well is revealed in a few of his autobiographical comments that emerge in his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*:

I was ordained Deacon in 1725, and Priest in the year following. But it was many years after this before I was convinced of the great truths above recited. During all that time I was utterly ignorant of *the nature* and condition of justification. Sometimes I confounded it with sanctification; (particularly when I was in Georgia).⁶⁰

One of the reasons, then, that sanctification cannot precede justification is that sinners are incapable of doing good works, properly speaking, which are the fruit of justification. Accordingly, the elderly Wesley continued to exclaim in 1773, maintaining basic continuity with his early position, "I still believe, no good works can be done before justification."⁶¹ Indeed, the distinction between good and not good works, strictly speaking, is a soteriological marker that underscores the crucial nature of justification, the first focus of the Wesleyan order of salvation, by highlighting the difference between before and after.

"Forgiveness is the *beginning* of redemption," Wesley observes, "as the resurrection is the completion of it."⁶² Put another way, justification is surrounded not simply by soteriological change that constitutes a difference in degree, an incremental change, but by a change of decisiveness, one of *quality*; it entails the difference between good and not good works, properly speaking.⁶³

With this background in mind, it is not surprising to learn that Wesley takes great care in defining the nature of justification in his piece "Justification by Faith," produced in 1746. Apparently, he wants to leave little room for misunderstanding concerning this significant teaching. And though he will subsequently explore the notion of a twofold justification, especially during the early 1770s, Wesley maintains in this present context that the justification of which Paul writes—Romans 4:5 is the text for this sermon—is "one and no more. It is the present remission of our sins or our first acceptance with God."⁶⁴ Moreover, just as Wesley defined the nature of faith earlier in terms of a *via negativa*, thereby removing most of the obstacles and much of the confusion surrounding it, so, too, will he explore the nature of justification in this present sermon by pointing out precisely what it is not.

Justification, first of all, is not "the being made actually just and righteous. This is *sanctification*; which is indeed in some degree the immediate *fruit* of justification, but nevertheless is a distinct gift of God."⁶⁵ And Wesley keeps these doctrines separate, conceptually if not in practice, by making a distinction between the work that God does "for us" (justification) and the work that he does "in us" (sanctification) as demonstrated in his sermon "The New Birth." He explains:

If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental they are doubtless these two—the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work which God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins; the latter to the great work which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature.⁶⁶

And elsewhere Wesley teaches that justification entails a relative change, but sanctification, a real change: "The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children; by the latter our inmost souls are changed so that of sinners we become saints."⁶⁷ The one takes away the guilt of sin; the other removes its power.

Second, justification is also not the "clearing [of] us from the accusation brought against us by *the law*,"⁶⁸ in the sense that, "whereas we have

transgressed the law of God and thereby deserved the damnation of hell, God does not inflict on those who are justified the punishment which they had deserved."⁶⁹ What Wesley is most probably trying to point out here—and this is a difficult passage—is that justification does not simply deal with the issue of punishment to the exclusion of a consideration of the actual transgression itself. To do so could result in antinomianism, making the moral law void through faith, in the sense that God's justifying activity would be viewed as somehow entailing a license to sin or—worse yet—permission to remain comfortable in sin, since all penalty has been removed.

Third, justification does not imply that God is deceived by those who are justified; "that he thinks them to be what in fact they are not, that he accounts them to be other wise than they are . . . or [that he] believes [them to be] righteous when [they] are unrighteous."⁷⁰ Put another way, God simply does not judge those who are justified contrary to the real nature of things, nor does he confound them with Christ. Justification, then, is not a matter of sinners remaining in the guilt of their sins while they are covered with the righteousness of Christ. Wesley explains:

The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more in this manner confound me with Christ than with David or Abraham.⁷¹

The charge that Wesley's theology was problematic along the lines that God was supposedly deceived in terms of the justified or that justification itself represented a legal fiction grew out of his affirmation, along with the Protestant Reformers, Luther, and Calvin, that the Holy One justifies not saints, not those who are in some measure holy before they are forgiven, but sinners. Underscoring the sheer gratuity of justification as a species of free grace, Wesley maintained that "God *justifieth* not the godly, but the *ungodly*; not those that are holy already, but the unholy."⁷² In fact, so strongly did Wesley link justification with the covenant of grace, as opposed to the covenant of works given to Adam and Eve alone, that any proffered "holiness" prior to justification actually represented not an instance of grace but a departure from the saving way that God had already established in Jesus Christ. Commenting on Romans 4:5, Wesley reasoned: "If a man could possibly be made holy before he was justified, it would entirely set his justification aside; seeing he could not, in the very nature of the thing, be justified if he were not, at that very time, ungodly."⁷³ Odd as it may seem, in these comments, Wesley clearly affirms that sinfulness, being

ungodly, and not any sort of sanctity, is the prior and proper condition for justification. That is, in having faith in Jesus Christ, sinners are justified as a free and gracious gift by a loving God. And to those fearful servants who were under the spirit of bondage, Wesley offered them the following words of encouragement: "Look up! And expect Him to cry in your heart, Abba, Father! He is nigh that justifieth! that justifieth the ungodly and him that worketh not."⁷⁴

Justification as Freedom from Guilt: The First Liberty of the Gospel

For Wesley then, justification, which always occurs by grace through faith, entails the pardon of sinners, the forgiveness of all their past sins. "It is that act of God the Father," he asserts, "whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he 'showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past.' "⁷⁵ Observe in this definition that there are three elements of special significance. First, as noted in a previous chapter, justification is based on the atoning work of Christ, on the "propitiation made by the blood of his Son." Indeed, Wesley explores this sacrificial idea, in concert with other variables, in his treatise *The Principles of a Methodist*, written in 1742, in language that is almost an exact replica of Thomas Cranmer's own: To express my meaning a little more at large. I believe three things must go together in our justification: upon God's part, his great mercy and grace; upon Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice by the offering his body and shedding his blood . . . and upon our part, true and living faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.⁷⁶

Second, since justification entails the remission or forgiveness of sins, it results in liberation from the power of *guilt*, which is nothing less than the first liberty of the gospel, so that one may now richly enjoy the favor and goodness of God in *peace*. Again, justification restores the sinner to a right relationship with God—a relationship no longer marked by alienation and excessive fear.⁷⁷ As Wesley himself put it: "And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending, but from all servile fear, from that 'fear which hath torment'; from fear of punishment, from fear of the wrath of God."⁷⁸ To be sure, a genuine healing of the soul begins to take place at this level of grace as well as a quickening of the spiritual senses so that one now sees not a God of wrath but a God of love. In his sermon "Salvation by Faith," for example, Wesley notes:

This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word "justification," which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him.⁷⁹

Third, Wesley limits the forgiveness of sins to those that are *past*: "This tells me that Christ hath redeemed us (all that believe) from the curse or punishment justly due to our *past* transgressions of God's law."⁸⁰ And again, "that justification whereof our Articles and Homilies speak," Wesley notes, "means present pardon and acceptance with God, who therein 'declares his righteousness' or mercy by or 'for the remission of the sins that are past.'"⁸¹ Here Wesley is perhaps fearful of a libertine interpretation, one that would view justification as entailing the forgiveness of future sins with the miserable result that justification, so understood, would become insurance *for* sin rather than freedom *from* its guilt. To avoid this conclusion, Wesley maintained that forgiveness pertains only to those sins that are past. Therefore, if one commits open, willful sin subsequent to justification, then one must confess one's sins and seek the grace of God afresh.

Imputation

Yet another way that Wesley contended that sinners, not saints, are justified was through his carefully expressed doctrine of imputation. In "The Lord Our Righteousness," for instance, written in 1765, Wesley affirms that the human righteousness of Christ, both active and passive, is imputed to believers when they believe, "in that very hour the righteousness of Christ is theirs."⁸² Indeed, faith and the righteousness of Christ are inseparable for Wesley, and there is no true faith that does not have the righteousness of Christ as its object.⁸³ "I have no hope," he writes, "but that . . . I shall find Christ and 'be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ.'"⁸⁴ Albert Outler expressed these truths in a slightly different way by underscoring the importance of receiving what God has wrought in Christ: "We have no part in our own justification before God, save the *passive* act of accepting and trusting the merits of Christ."⁸⁵ Though Wesley obviously held a doctrine of imputation, he was, to a considerable degree, uneasy about the use (and possible abuse) of this teaching, as evidenced by his cautionary comments to James Hervey in 1756: "Do not dispute for that *particular phrase* 'the imputed righteousness of Christ.' It is not scriptural; it is not necessary. . . . But it has done immense hurt."⁸⁶ Indeed, earlier, in the Conference Minutes of 1744, in response to the question "In what sense is the righteousness of Christ imputed to all mankind, or to believers?" it was declared: "We do not find it expressly affirmed in Scripture, that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any; although we do find that 'faith is imputed' to us 'for righteousness.'"⁸⁷ Elsewhere, Wesley acknowledged " 'the righteousness of Christ' is an expression which I do not find in the Bible. 'The righteousness of God' is an expression which I do find there."⁸⁸ Despite these cautions, he nevertheless affirmed the basic meaning behind such expressions by noting, "Yet we will not deny it if men only mean thereby that 'we are accepted through His merits' or 'for the sake of what He has done and suffered for us.'"⁸⁹ What Wesley feared, once again, were the possible antinomian implications that could be drawn from this doctrine. In his *Thoughts on Christ's Imputed Righteousness*, for instance, he remarks: "I am myself the more sparing in the use of it [the phrase "the imputed righteousness of Christ"] . . . because the Antinomians use it at this day to justify the grossest abominations."⁹⁰ Not surprising, then, Wesley took great care to state clearly in

his writings precisely in what sense the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers.

Simply put, for Wesley, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers in the sense that they are now accepted by God not for the sake of anything that they have done, whether it be works of charity, mercy, or the like, but *solely* because of what Christ has accomplished through his life and death on their behalf.⁹¹ Quoting John Goodwin's *Imputatio Fidei* in his own work, Wesley declares that "God justifies the believer for the sake of Christ's righteousness, and not for any righteousness of his own."⁹² Earlier he had published Richard Baxter's *Aphorisms of Justification*. Wesley's doctrine of imputation, in other words, is yet another way of highlighting the crucial nature of faith, the efficaciousness of the atonement, the graciousness of justification, and the gift of God alone—a gift that the sinner cannot work for or earn, but must be graciously received. "We are 'justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ,' "⁹³ Wesley writes. Imputation, then, is not a cloak that covers continuing unrighteousness—a conception that, unfortunately, was found in some corners of eighteenth-century Calvinism. Instead, imputation is a testament to the sheer grace and utter favor of God in forgiving sinners. Viewed another way, Wesley's doctrine of imputation and its relation to justification suggest that the righteousness of Christ is the "whole and sole *meritorious cause* of the justification of a sinner before God,"⁹⁴ as noted earlier in the chapter on Christology. By underscoring the work of Christ as the meritorious and not the formal cause of redemption, Wesley, in the eyes of Outler, remained evangelical, while at the same time he could embrace "prevenience, free will and 'universal redemption' "⁹⁵ in a way that Calvinists could not.

Now Wesley employed the language of imputation in his writings so long as it was understood that it related only to justification, to forgiveness and acceptance, and not to sanctification itself. This fencing of the doctrine of imputation to keep it from flowing into the doctrine of sanctification expressed Wesley's concern and fear, especially after 1765, that imputation, improperly understood, could easily lead to taking the righteousness of Christ, once again, as a cloak for the sinner's own unrighteousness. Wesley writes:

In the meantime what we are afraid of is this: lest any should use the phrase, "the righteousness of Christ," or, "the righteousness of Christ is 'imputed to me,' " as a cover for his unrighteousness. . . . Warn them against making "Christ the minister of sin"! Against making void that solemn decree of God, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," by a vain imagination of being *holy in*

Christ. O warn them that if they remain unrighteous, the righteousness of Christ will profit them nothing!⁹⁶

Again, because of his fear of antinomianism, Wesley, at times, was unwilling to let the statement "the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers" stand alone, but he immediately added that "God *implants* righteousness in every one to whom he has *imputed* it."⁹⁷ To be sure, Wesley carefully distinguished imputed from inherent righteousness as is evident in his following observation: "'But do not you believe *inherent* righteousness?' Yes, in its proper place; not as the ground of our acceptance with God, but as the *fruit* of it; not in the place of *imputed* righteousness, but as consequent upon it."⁹⁸ In these theological reflections, then, inherent righteousness (sanctification) cannot in any sense be the ground of justification, revealing once more how merciful and gracious is the activity of God in forgiving sins.

The Question of *Sola Fide*

Such an understanding of the justification not of the righteous but of sinners put Wesley at odds at times with some of the principal leaders of his own Anglican tradition as well as those of Rome.⁹⁹ For example, believing that John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1691 until his death three years later, had taught that sanctification preceded justification, both Wesley and Whitefield referred to him, accurate or not, as an infidel.¹⁰⁰ And in the context of his impending evangelical conversion, Wesley criticized his one-time mentor, William Law, gentle soul and guiding mystic, for not leading him to "a living faith in the blood of Christ."¹⁰¹ Two years later, Wesley confessed in his journal: "After we had wandered many years in the new path, of salvation by faith and works; about two years ago it pleased God to show us the old way, of salvation by faith only."¹⁰²

In terms of Rome, Wesley contended that many of its theologians "were entirely unacquainted with the nature of justification,"¹⁰³ and this for a number of reasons: first of all, they "confound sanctification and justification together."¹⁰⁴ For example, Canon XI of the historic Council of Trent decreed, "If any one saith, that men are justified . . . by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and *the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost*, and is inherent in them . . . let him be ¹⁰⁵ Second, in this same Canon the members of the council, in Wesley's judgment, likewise anathematized the doctrine of justification by faith alone and thereby "anathematized the Apostle Paul."anathema."¹⁰⁶ In other words, not faith alone, but once again an infusion of charity or love into the soul, what is otherwise known as sanctification, was deemed necessary in the eyes of Rome, lest justification be rendered "fictive." Third, Canon IX argued that justification must be seen as a species of co-operant grace whereby both *being* and *doing* are in effect absolutely required in order to prepare for its reception as revealed in the following:

If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema.¹⁰⁷

This last language of Canon IX can in some respects resonate with certain

elements of Wesley's theology, in terms of co-operant grace properly understood; but this does not mean that Wesley's overall practical theology should therefore be utterly subsumed under a catholic paradigm, for to do so would entail neglecting important protestant insights. Compare the language of Rome just cited with Wesley's own as expressed in his key sermon "The Righteousness of Faith":

Whosoever therefore thou art who desirest to be forgiven and reconciled to the favour of God, do not say in thy heart, "I must *first do this*: I must *first* conquer every sin, break off every evil word and work, and do all good to all men; or I must *first* go to church, receive the Lord's Supper, hear more sermons, and say more prayers." Alas, my brother, thou art clean gone out of the way. Thou art still "ignorant of the righteousness of God," and art "seeking to establish thy own righteousness."^{[108](#)}

And in this same sermon Wesley adds: "Neither say in thy heart, 'I can't be accepted yet because I am not *good enough*.' Who is good enough, who ever was, to merit acceptance at God's hands? Was ever any child of Adam good enough for this?"^{[109](#)} In light of these basic gospel truths, Wesley's counsel to his followers could only be: "Look for it *just as you are*, unfit, unworthy, unholy, by simple faith, every day, every hour."^{[110](#)} Including these other statements that Wesley affirmed helps keep in place the proper balance of his conjunctive theology.

Despite this material, some Methodist theologians have not only noted a similarity between the contents of Canon IX of the Council of Trent and the teaching of Wesley himself (which we recognize as well), but also have drawn conclusions that appear to be unwarranted. William Cannon, for instance, argued that, according to Wesley, "faith is only conferred on those who sincerely desire it, who actively manifest that desire in repentance, and who, if there is time, bring forth works meet for repentance."^{[111](#)} However, the use of the term "only" in this context appears to make repentance and its fruits required for justification in virtually the same way as faith. That Cannon has indeed brought Wesley's practical theology under an overarching synergism is evident in his following observation:

The usual conception of divine initiative and human response is of course descriptive of Wesley's teaching; but, if understood properly, the conception of *human* initiative and *divine* response is likewise descriptive of his teaching and is not alien to his theology. Why? Simply because divine initiative in bestowing common or "preventing" grace is taken for granted.^{[112](#)}

In a similar vein, John Cobb maintained that "Wesley did not believe that justifying faith could arise without repentance. . . . If such efforts necessarily precede justification, the doctrine of faith alone is the condition is compromised."¹¹³ This last claim appears to be equally problematic and fails to take into account other elements in Wesley's theology. For one thing, in light of the emphasis that Wesley did indeed place upon repentance, this approach immediately concludes that faith alone (free grace) is thereby undermined and therefore subsumes the entirety of Wesley's doctrine of justification, once again, under a co-operant, synergistic reading (catholic paradigm). Though this move has been duplicated by others in the name of a broader "catholicity," and with ecumenical purpose, it nevertheless misses crucial distinctions in Wesley's theology that held his sophisticated conception of grace in place.

On one level, and properly understood, we can agree with both Cobb and Cannon that repentance appears to be necessary for justification in Wesley's practical theology since it apparently needs little time and opportunity for its occurrence, elements that make up the conditional issues of Wesley's "if " clause, "*if there be time and opportunity*." Nevertheless, the distinctions noted earlier with respect to repentance and works suitable for repentance in terms of "not in the same sense" and "not in the same degree" must be brought to bear in this context in order to demonstrate that repentance and works, though in some sense necessary, do *not* justify. Faith alone justifies. Put another way, faith is the only element that is *absolutely* required for justification as evidenced by Wesley's comments to Dr. Horne in 1762: "nothing is *absolutely* necessary to this but 'believing in Him that justifieth the ungodly.'"¹¹⁴

From 1738 until his death, Wesley repeatedly affirmed throughout his writings that believers are justified not by works of the law or by merit but by faith alone. To illustrate, in May 1738, Wesley observed to William Law "that by doing the works of this law should no flesh living be justified."¹¹⁵ In light of this, Lindstrom rightly pointed out that Wesley's doctrine of justification expresses a fundamentally Reformed attitude. The law had no place *in loco justificationis*. A few years later in his early sermon "Justification by Faith," Wesley declares (in a way that looks very much like Luther's doctrine) that faith *alone* is the condition of justification: "Faith therefore is the *necessary* condition of justification. Yea, and the *only necessary* condition thereof."¹¹⁶ In other words, faith is the only thing without which no one is justified; it is, to use Wesley's own language, "the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon."¹¹⁷ No justification, then, ever takes

place without it. In addition, faith is not only *the* necessary condition of justification, but it is also a *sufficient* condition—a truth that the Council of Trent could never accept.¹¹⁸ "This [faith] alone is sufficient for justification," Wesley points out in 1765; "Everyone that believes is justified, *whatever else he has or has not*."¹¹⁹ Again in his notes on Galatians 6:12, Wesley declares, "faith in a crucified Saviour is alone sufficient for justification."¹²⁰ And a year later, he reviews the whole affair in his *Remarks on a Defence of Aspasio Vindicated* and exclaims:

I believe justification by faith alone, as much as I believe there is a God. I declared this in a sermon, preached before the University of Oxford, eight-and-twenty years ago. I declared it to all the world eighteen years ago, in a sermon written expressly on the subject. I have never varied from it, no, not an hair's breadth, from 1738 to this day.¹²¹

Furthermore, in 1783, in his "General Spread of the Gospel," the elderly Wesley points out that "we are justified by faith *alone*."¹²² And in his "On Dissipation," produced the following year, he once again states: "It is by this faith *alone* that he is 'created anew' in or *through* 'Christ Jesus.'"¹²³ Remarkably, this is the same doctrine that Wesley preached in 1738 in his sermon "Salvation by Faith."¹²⁴ More important, Wesley believed that this teaching was also expressed in the ancient authors; especially in "Origen, St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, Hilary, Basil, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine."¹²⁵

In light of the preceding argument, Colin Williams is far closer to the truth of the matter in immediately distinguishing "repentance faith" as the faith of a servant and "justifying faith" as the faith of a son.¹²⁶ Such a difference allows Williams to parse in a careful way Wesley's wellnuanced understanding of grace, holding in place, in a conjunctive way that bespeaks of Wesley's own theological style, both "catholic" and "protestant" emphases as revealed in his following observation:

His [Wesley's] increasing emphasis on fruits meet for repentance did nothing to alter his doctrine of justification by faith alone, for these works are the fruit of repentance faith and the gift of God's grace, and far from making us fit in any moral sense to receive justifying faith, they are simply the sign of our readiness to *allow* God [emphasis on receiving grace] to continue his work within us.¹²⁷

So then, given Wesley's conjunctive theology, two key interpretive errors are possible in this area. On the one hand, Wesley's protestant understanding of grace may be easily and almost unwittingly subsumed under a larger cooperative

paradigm, such that divine working is deemed never to occur apart from human working. But justification remained for Wesley the work of God alone and such an offer of forgiveness was, therefore, not absolutely dependent upon prior human working. In the best broad sense of prevenient grace, God has *already* acted in the face of human sin and has richly forgiven the entire world in Christ. How gracious, loving, and merciful the Most High is! Nevertheless, that free forgiveness must be received. In other words, Wesley's protestant emphasis helped him avoid not only the incipient moralism that sometimes results from considering all grace as co-operant, but also the error of laying additional burdens on the backs of sinners, indicating, sometimes in some very subtle ways, that they were not good enough or have not yet done enough to be forgiven by a holy God.

On the other hand, Wesley's catholic understanding of grace is vital in that it highlights—if *there be time and opportunity*—the way (the means of grace, for example) appointed by God in which sinners are to wait for the extraordinary work of the Most High. Rejecting all forms of quietism in his catholic emphasis, Wesley encouraged response to the prior leading of God in prevenient and convicting grace, knowing that such a response, though it constituted an important element along the path of salvation, nevertheless did not constitute the basis upon which one is justified. Simply put, the careful balance of Wesley's conjunctive theology avoided both moralism and solafidianism, both works righteousness and quietism. The following table, then, summarizes the discussion pertaining to justification by faith alone and its antecedent doctrines:

A Section of the Wesleyan <i>Ordo Salutis</i>	
Repentance and Works Suitable Thereto	Justification
Co-operant or Responsible Grace	Free Grace
Responding to Prior (Prevenient) Grace	Receiving the Free Gift of God
Human Working	The Work of God Alone (<i>Sola Fide</i>)

Justification and Regeneration Are Linked

What troubled some about the idea of the justification of the sinner as taught by the continental Reformers and by Wesley himself is that it seemed to suggest an ongoing lawlessness. Addressing this same concern, Outler noted, "It is the antinomianism implied in this classical Protestant version of justification as God's acceptance of the sinner in his sin, *no matter what*, that Romans and Anglicans have always feared in the traditional Protestant soteriology."¹²⁸ Such an objection, however, actually caused Wesley little concern since, though he logically distinguished between justification and sanctification (underscoring the graciousness of redemption in that sinners are justified without any prior "true Christian holiness"¹²⁹), he then indicated, in a way that would undermine antinomianism, that these two distinct gifts ever occur simultaneously, never one without the other. Thus, "no holiness can exist," Wesley exclaimed, "till, 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' "¹³⁰ Christians, then, must "not think or speak of justification so as to supersede sanctification, so neither [must] they think or speak of sanctification so as to supersede justification."¹³¹ Consequently, if these gifts of grace were separated such that one could, after all, be justified in the *ongoing* absence of regeneration or initial sanctification, then significant problems would indeed emerge as Wesley himself realized as he criticized Thomas Maxfield precisely along these lines:

I dislike your directly or indirectly depreciating justification, *saying a justified person is not in Christ, is not born of God*, is not a new creature, has not a new heart, is not sanctified, not a temple of the Holy Ghost, or that he cannot please God or cannot grow in grace.¹³²

Beyond this, Wesley explored this objection, coming from both Romans and Anglicans alike, in his *Notes* on Galatians 2:18, in which he reasoned: "The objection were just, if the gospel promised justification to men continuing in sin. But it does not. Therefore if any who profess the gospel do not live according to it, they are sinners, it is certain, but not justified, and so the gospel is clear."¹³³ Simply put, though no true Christian holiness can precede justification, it must immediately follow it. Justification, properly speaking, ever occurs with regeneration; never one without the other.

The Difference between Acceptance and Justification

The tight association of justification and regeneration is also evidenced in Wesley's observation that to be justified means "if we continue therein, we shall be finally saved."¹³⁴ Such a statement could not have been made about those who have the faith of a servant (broad sense), since they remain under the spirit of bondage and therefore under the power and dominion of sin as well. Recall Wesley's language cited earlier: "Exhort him to press on by all possible means, till he passes 'from faith to faith'; from the faith of a *servant* to the faith of a *son*; from the *spirit of bondage* unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love."¹³⁵ Indeed, Wesley explained in a letter to Laurence Coughlan in 1768 that "many think they are justified, and are not."¹³⁶

Some recent interpreters, however, have confused the issue of "acceptance" (for the light and grace that one has) with justification and have immediately concluded that all who are accepted are therefore justified.¹³⁷ They were likely led to this judgment by noting the common element of not being under the wrath or curse of God. In other words, in terms of justifying faith, Wesley wrote, "I mean that faith which whosoever hath is not under the wrath and the curse of God."¹³⁸ But he also defined the "acceptance" of the servant of God (our broad sense) in a similar way, displayed in the following:

And whosoever in every nation believes thus far the Apostle declares is "accepted of him." He actually is at that very moment in a state of acceptance. But he is at present *only* a *servant* of God, not properly a *son*. Meantime, let it be well observed that "the wrath of God" no longer "abideth on him."¹³⁹

But the common element of no longer being under the wrath of God does not necessarily mean that all those who are accepted are therefore justified, as in Laura Bartels Felleman's view.¹⁴⁰ To conclude as much is to commit the logical error of what is called "affirming the consequent." To illustrate, consider the statement "They are justified" as *A* and "Are not under the wrath or curse of God" as *B*. A valid form of the argument (*modus ponens*) would be as follows: If *A* then *B*; *A* ∴ *B*. In other words, given *A* (they are justified), then we can conclude *B* (are not under the wrath or curse of God). So far all is well. But notice what happens if we begin again with the same premise. If *A* then *B*, but this time *B* is given (are not under the wrath or curse of God), and then we conclude *A* (they are justified). This second move, though it *appears* to be

correct, is not a valid argument at all. We can see the error of affirming the consequent more clearly if we take a very simple example. Consider the phrase "This man is John Wesley" as *A*, and "He is five foot three" as *B*. A valid form of the argument would therefore be, If *A* then *B*; *A*.: *B*. In other words, given "This man is John Wesley," then "He is five foot three" logically follows. But notice what happens if we begin with *B*, "He is five foot three," and then conclude *A*, "This man is John Wesley." Such a result is not part of a valid argument because all sorts of people can be five foot three without being John Wesley. In the same way, people may not be under the wrath and curse of God and yet may not be justified simply because more is entailed in being justified than this. Affirming the consequent, then, the error committed here constitutes a failure to recognize that what is entailed in a given claim (such as to be justified) may be multiple and therefore not uniquely determined. Unfortunately, in this particular instance, it results in lowering Wesley's own standards (and promises) of redemption. Simply put, all who are justified are accepted, but not all who are accepted are thereby justified.

A careful examination of Wesley's word choice in terms of "acceptance" suggests his increasing pastoral sensitivity. Early in his ministry, Wesley actually discouraged those who did not know their sins were forgiven with some of his more insensitive comments. Later on, as he was "sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God,"¹⁴¹ to use his own words, he came to understand that "even one who feared God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."¹⁴² This acceptance, then, of those servants (some in distant lands, who never heard of Christ) who fear God and work righteousness may mean that they are *in process* so to speak; they are *on the way* of salvation and, therefore, should be encouraged. Put another way, they are accepted for the light and grace that they have and should be urged to go forward to be open to redemptive graces, properly speaking. And Wesley's soteriological optimism is borne out in his observation: "And, indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God."¹⁴³ But we cannot immediately conclude that they are justified *now*. For if they were, again given the linkage between justification and regeneration in Wesley's theology, then they would also have to be born of God and evidence one of the marks of the new birth in being set free from the power and dominion of sin. But such grace describes not a servant of God (broad sense) but a child of God. "There is no reason why you should be satisfied with the faith of a materialist, a heathen, or a deist; nor indeed with that of a servant,"

Wesley cautions; "Press on till you receive the Spirit of adoption. Rest not till that Spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit that you are a child of God."[144](#)

Temporal Elements as the Key

Though process (in the form of human cooperation with God, doing works of charity and mercy, as well as using all the means of grace) is clearly an aspect of Wesley's understanding of redemption, it would be a mistake, once again, to conclude that this emphasis constitutes the entirety of the Wesleyan order of salvation. Indeed, beyond viewing salvation as a process, Wesley indicated repeatedly throughout his career that redemption is punctuated by instantaneous elements along the way. For example, when Wesley consulted the Bible in 1738 to determine whether or not justification is instantaneous, he came to the conclusion, as he later stated in his *Principles of a Methodist*: "I searched the Scriptures again touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles; but to my utter astonishment I found scarce any instances there of other than *instantaneous* conversions."¹⁴⁵ And in his *Farther Appeal* published in 1745, Wesley noted that "the first sowing of this seed I cannot conceive to be other than instantaneous—whether I consider experience, or the Word of God, or the very nature of the thing."¹⁴⁶

Wesley, however, not only affirmed that justification, which is preceded by process, is itself instantaneous, but also maintained that this was the experience of the majority of Christians. For example, in a letter to "John Smith," he states: "I believe it [justifying faith] is *generally* given in an instant."¹⁴⁷ And a few months later, in December 1745, Wesley develops this notion in a letter to this same person: "Concerning the *instantaneous* and the *gradual* work, what I still affirm is this: that I know hundreds of persons whose hearts were one moment filled with fear and sorrow and pain, and the next with peace and joy in believing."¹⁴⁸ Moreover, in 1762, in his correspondence with Dr. Warburton, Wesley adds to this line of reasoning and exclaims: "I have seen very many persons changed in a *moment* from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and praise."¹⁴⁹ And his counsel to Miss Cooke in 1785, whose experience departed from the usual course, in whom the Holy Spirit worked in "a gentle and almost insensible manner,"¹⁵⁰ does not detract from this ongoing emphasis in the least. In other words, psychological variability must not be mistaken for soteriological diversity. Consequently, the way in which justifying grace is received may admit of some departures from general experience, but the soteriological reality is exactly the same: that is, if justifying grace has been

actualized in a life, in time/space, so to speak, if a threshold has been crossed, so that one no longer remains on the porch, then there will be a "moment" whether or not that moment is dramatic—or even remembered. Otherwise, saving grace has not been *realized*.

Moreover, it is precisely the elderly Wesley who draws a delicate balance between the elements of process and instantaneousness in the *ordo salutis*, while at the same time he tends to stress the later. "A gradual work of grace constantly precedes the instantaneous work both of justification and sanctification," Wesley writes to Arthur Keene in 1784; "But the work itself (of sanctification as well as justification) is undoubtedly instantaneous."¹⁵¹ And the following year, in a letter to George Gibbon, Wesley repeats this theme with significant effect: "What you said was exactly right, the work of God is undoubtedly instantaneous with regard to sanctification as well as justification, and it is no objection at all that the work is gradual also."¹⁵² This last correspondence (and that to Dr. Warburton earlier) is especially interesting because, according to Chamberlain, many mainstream Anglicans "did not accept the Methodist view, and that of the Puritans before them, that this warm experience of piety comes via a climactic moment of faith."¹⁵³ Instead, it was supposed to emerge naturally and gradually out of baptism.¹⁵⁴ To be sure, Anglicans were marked by considerable disagreement among themselves concerning "whether justification was instantaneous or continuous."¹⁵⁵ By the eighteenth century, however, "most Anglicans were referring to justification as an ongoing process,"¹⁵⁶ and Wesley's theology was, therefore, viewed as something of an oddity.

Despite the opposition from some of his own Anglican peers, Wesley underscored the instantaneous aspect of justification for a number of reasons. First, he believed that a focus on the availability of salvation now, in this moment, would illuminate the way for the reception of saving grace on the part of the convinced sinner. Indeed, not to attempt to bring the issue to a head would probably result in the failure of sinners to receive the rich favor of God through the subtle, but no less deadly, sin of presumption. For example, in a letter to his brother Charles drafted in 1772, Wesley elaborates:

I find by long experience it comes exactly to the same point, to tell men they shall be saved from all sin when they die; or to tell them it may be a year hence, or a week hence, or any time but *now*. Our word does not profit, either as to justification or sanctification, unless we can bring them to expect the blessing *while we speak*.¹⁵⁷

Second, the temporal element of instantaneousness reveals that the divine/human cooperation that takes place *prior* to justification is now at an end, at least for the time being. That is, it is not human works or response that justify, but faith *alone* (grace) that justifies. Put another way, it is through the sheer favor of the Most High, through the gratuity of divine—not human—action, that one is forgiven. And it is precisely the element of instantaneousness that holds this important truth in place. In other words, if aspirants of saving faith want "something to be done *first*,"¹⁵⁸ as Wesley puts it, before justification, then they are obviously seeking it "by works unto this day."¹⁵⁹ But if it is by the grace of God, then they may expect it as they are and they may expect it *now*. The temporal elements, crucial in so many ways, indicate that justification is beyond human power or control.

But not only does the instantaneous element of justification highlight faith and the grace of God, but it also underscores the freedom of God and in a way that brought Wesley's understanding of justifying faith and grace—by his own admission—very close to that of John Calvin. As a matter of fact, when Wesley focused exclusively on the "moment" of justification itself, bracketing out the process both before and after it, he was even willing to entertain the idea of the irresistibility of grace:

With regard to . . . irresistible grace, I believe, that the grace which brings faith, and thereby salvation into the soul, is irresistible *at that moment*. That most believers may remember some time when God did *irresistibly* convince them of sin; That most believers do at some other times find God *irresistibly* acting upon their souls. Yet I believe that the grace of God both before and after those moments, may be, and hath been, resisted.¹⁶⁰

Therefore, the resistibility of grace properly pertains, to use Wesley's own words, "to the grace of God both before and after those moments."¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, lest Wesley's views be seen as too great an accommodation to Calvinism for the sake of peace (in his dialog with George Whitefield), Wesley added: "That, in general it [grace] does not act *irresistibly*, but we *may* comply therewith or *may* not."¹⁶²

So then, Wesley held not one but two aspects of his doctrine of salvation in tension: both process *and* instantaneousness, divine and human cooperation as well as the work of God alone. The former aspect depicts his "catholic" emphasis and points to human cooperation with God as men and women are empowered by divine grace and are in some sense prepared (if there be time and opportunity) for the decisive gifts of salvation, that is, for justification and for

initial and entire sanctification. The latter aspect, however, depicts his "protestant" emphasis and points not to human cooperation, but to the free activity of God and, therefore, to the sheer gratuity (favor) of grace. Again, the former aspect displays the ongoing growth and development that is a normal part of any vital spiritual life. The latter aspect displays not process but the crucial element of actualization of extraordinary graces. The inculcation of virtues along the way of divine and human cooperation can easily be mistaken for simply being human virtues; justification and regeneration, however, cannot. In other words, process issues in crucial realizations that are then followed by further process toward an unrealized soteriological goal, even entire sanctification.¹⁶³

Continuing this line of thought, to focus on the first aspect of Wesley's soteriological tension (process) exclusively or to the virtual neglect of the latter (instantaneousness) will likely result in a very anthropocentric reading of Wesley's theology in which human effort will eclipse the radiance of divine grace. Nor is it any more accurate to claim that divine/human cooperation characterizes the entirety or even the most crucial aspects of the *ordo salutis*, as if men and women were ever equal partners with God, for there are key "moments" along the way when God acts alone and in the face of human impotence.¹⁶⁴ Again, the danger in overemphasizing process (and thereby neglecting the realization of key graces) in Wesley's *ordo salutis* is that salvation may be viewed as an incremental process, whereby one "soteriological moment" is hardly distinguishable from the next. Here, nothing decisive or extraordinary happens in the hearts of believers. Here there is not really any change in quality but only in degree. Indeed, paradigms that are drawn chiefly from educational or psychological theory may be unduly anthropocentric when they surface in a soteriological context. Growing in grace is, at least in some respects, unlike other kinds of human development: that is, it involves growth that is, at times, not principally under human control but is dependent upon the favor of the Most High.

Furthermore, to focus almost exclusively on the second aspect, that is, the instantaneous element, to the virtual neglect of process, would likewise issue in error. It would result in the failure to perceive how men and women must, after all, be prepared, if there be time and opportunity, at least in some sense, to receive the richest appropriations of grace. This means, then, that, for Wesley at least, people are in some sense responsible for whether or not they are justified (emphasis on process, synergism, cooperation, the means of grace, and so on) although they cannot justify themselves (emphasis on realization, faith alone

justifies, divine freedom, human impotence, and so on).

Moreover, though John Wesley, admittedly, underscored the elements of process, especially during the 1770s and in a way that roiled the Calvinist Methodists, it must also be borne in mind that this was, after all, an emphasis, that it was simply one aspect of a larger doctrinal whole. Wesley had other language in his theological repertoire that he never repudiated. This consideration, added to Wesley's affirmation of *sola fide* in his writings during the 1780s and coupled with his stress on the grace of God not simply as power but also as favor, reveals that justification by grace and by faith alone are elements that never dropped out of his theology. Again, for Wesley (and it bears repeating), only faith justifies— not works, not obedience to the moral law, not sincerity, not the means of grace, not even good intentions. Consequently, Wesley's quip made to John Newton in 1765, cited earlier, that he had not changed his thinking on justification since 1738 is, after all, accurate. More important perhaps, Wesley's claim, made late in his career, that he taught the doctrine of justification by faith alone is, in fact, credible.

Today and Tomorrow: The Realities of Forgiveness

Ernest Hemingway recounts the story of a Spanish father who took out an ad in the newspaper *El Liberal*. He wanted to be reconciled with his son who had abandoned him earlier and fled to Madrid. The ad simply read: "Paco Meet Me at Hotel Montana noon Tuesday; All is forgiven, Papa."¹⁶⁵ Now Paco is a very common name in Spain, much like Jack is common in America. When the remorseful father arrived at the square where the hotel was situated, he discovered eight hundred men named Paco waiting to meet their fathers.¹⁶⁶

Talk about forgiveness and in many cases you will have an attentive ear. In fact, in the past decade alone more than two hundred books have appeared on this topic.¹⁶⁷ The South African leader Archbishop Desmond Tutu captured just how vital forgiveness is for human relations when he poignantly, and without exaggeration, observed: "Without forgiveness there is no future."¹⁶⁸

A popular view is that all religions preach forgiveness, for, as the old saying goes, "to err is human; to forgive, divine." But this is clearly not the case. Eastern religions, according to Sandage, "do not admit divine forgiveness."¹⁶⁹ Instead, the doctrine of *karma*, the law of immutable justice, reveals that "sin will result in inevitable consequences. Thus, forgiveness is irrelevant."¹⁷⁰ Moreover, though the apostle Peter had asked Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother and offered what he, no doubt, thought to be the generous number of seven, the rabbis of the time suggested "three as the maximum number of times one might be expected to forgive."¹⁷¹ Jesus Christ, however, was lavish in his forgiveness and replied not seven times, as Peter had suggested, but seventy times seven. Indeed, so generous was Christ, as E. P. Sanders has observed, that he "seems to have invited people into the Kingdom without requiring them to repent in the way that repentance was understood within Judaism—that is, without requirements of restitution, sacrifice and obedience to the law."¹⁷² Developing this line of thought, Jones maintained: "It seems clear that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom transforms the relationship between repentance and forgiveness by stressing the gracious priority of forgiveness."¹⁷³ So understood, "pardon is all-powerful."¹⁷⁴

It is Christianity alone among world religions that places forgiveness at the

very heart of the faith in its proclamation that Christ died for the forgiveness of sins of the whole world. Nevertheless, this forgiveness— receiving what has been accomplished in the life and death of Christ— can also be viewed in another way, as a demand especially in light of the teaching of Jesus as depicted in the "Our Father," "And forgive us our debts, / as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). In other words, receiving the atoning work of Christ is linked in some sense to the sinner's forgiveness of others. What's more, the grace of God may actually be cut off in the face of ongoing un-forgiveness, for how can we expect to be forgiven by God if we have not forgiven our neighbor? Such a dynamic issues in what Weidner calls the "double burden of evil."¹⁷⁵ That is, "we can survive evil done to us but still not survive the trial of forgiving the evil."¹⁷⁶ Like it or not, we have to recognize that perpetrators not only can commit physical, moral, psychological, and spiritual evil against their neighbors, but also are able to pose a trial (what power they seem to have!) that can try the very souls of their victims. "Christianity is a religion in which sinners have all the advantages," Taylor exclaims; "They can talk bad about you every time you leave the room, and it is your job to excuse them with no thought of getting even. The burden is on you."¹⁷⁷ Little wonder, then, that in the Wisdom tradition of the desert fathers, the saints "usually ask to be delivered from the worst spiritual challenges, such as having to forgive."¹⁷⁸

In terms of definition, forgiveness is a gracious response to having been wronged by another. It represents the "last freedom" of people who have otherwise been manipulated, abused, and victimized. It may not lead to reconciliation or even contact, for perpetrators may desire no such thing; but it can lead to significant physical, emotional, and spiritual healing for the forgiver as several studies have shown.¹⁷⁹ According to some researchers, forgiveness involves "rooting out one's negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors directed at an offender and developing positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards him or her."¹⁸⁰ Smedes lays out this process in three basic steps:

First, we surrender our right to get even. . . . Second, we rediscover the humanity of our wrongdoer. When we have been badly injured and clearly wronged, we make an instant caricature of the person who did it to us. . . . And third, we wish our wrongdoer well. We not only surrender our right to revenge against him; we desire good things to happen to him. We bless him.¹⁸¹

A common theme in the current literature on forgiveness reveals that those who have come to a sense of peace in terms of significant wrongs have done so

through a change in attitude, viewing both the perpetrator and the evil itself in new ways. Indeed, a fresh interpretation, a wider perspective, and even taking into account the humanity of the evildoer can often prove helpful. Shelby, for instance, maintains that forgiveness entails an "intentional decision to change how we feel about what happened and what it means to us."¹⁸² Old painful events, and our estimation of them, are given new meanings. And Collins, for his part, notes that in forgiveness, "Our lives are no longer defined by the wound we received."¹⁸³ As such, the evil that we have endured must not become the defining element of our lives, the major script for our story (and identity), for that definition must lie elsewhere.

Ironical as it may seem, the road to forgiveness is often blocked by some very noble passions—a keen sense of justice, for one thing. Thoughts of the unfairness of it all, that may result in hurtful preoccupation and selfpity, can hold those who have been wronged above the fires of considerable spiritual and emotional pain. And the incensive powers of the soul themselves (vehement resistance to temptation and evil, for instance) that, within range, are proper may now be misdirected through which people and, in the worst cases, even God become targets of wrath.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, when a wound is picked repeatedly so that it does not heal, when a sense of anger and judgment now pass over into what the early church fathers called "secret anger" or "remembrance of wrongs,"¹⁸⁵ then the very sense of justice (so important for moral life) has been perverted into resentment, what one scholar calls "the arthritis of the spirit."¹⁸⁶ Indeed, resentment is so damning to the soul, St. Ignatius Brianchaninov contends, because it rejects love in the name of hurt.¹⁸⁷

But there is, of course, another side to justice, and glib forgiveness, even if it is to avoid the miseries of resentment, always appears "cheap." "That is, wrongs committed do and should matter, especially if we take love seriously in light of holiness. The problem, then, is that if forgiveness does not emerge out of an intentional and deliberate process, then it may seem to condone the offense, actually to enable evil. For one thing, it may give the impression that one can perpetrate evil with impunity, which is not the will of God at all. "What is needed, then," Hebblethwaite argues, "is a kind of forgiveness that is able to say, 'It *does* matter terribly. It will never be all right. But I still forgive you.' "¹⁸⁸

So then, justice and forgiveness must be properly balanced through the grace of God. On the one hand, to focus preeminently on issues surrounding justice may actually preclude forgiveness in unending demands for reform and

retributive practices. And in the worst instances, all of this may feed a spirit of vengeance, perhaps even hatred held tightly in place by the illusion, given the enormity of the evil, that we are "entitled." As Lundberg states, "At bottom, forgiveness cannot be grounded in justice or repentance."¹⁸⁹ In fact, the clear majority of texts about forgiveness from the early church fathers "do not mention repentance."¹⁹⁰ Like the gospel itself, forgiveness must be free. On the other hand, to offer forgiveness without a serious reckoning of the evil done is to ignore the reality of sin in a very sentimental way. And such sentimentality is not actually an instance of love, certainly not of holy love, but constitutes its on-the-cheap substitute. The genius of the Christian faith, then, is that it sees evil for what it is, and not as an illusion as in some other religions. It then triumphs over this darkness, transcends it, through its central fact of loving forgiveness.

During a conference held in Britain on comparative religions, an animated discussion arose as to what was Christianity's unique contribution to world religion. The controversy continued unabated until C. S. Lewis, in learning of the issue at stake, replied: "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."¹⁹¹ "Yes, of course," we might add, but how do sinful, struggling people get to that grace and the forgiveness that it offers? It all looks so much easier said than done. "By instinct," Yancey notes, "I feel I must *do something* in order to be accepted."¹⁹² Indeed, just as in Wesley's own day, so many people today struggle in the ungrace of thinking that they must *be* or *do* something first in order to be forgiven, an approach that is actually the last gasp of the sinful self to micromanage its own life, its vain attempt to "bring about" redemption. Such a course will likely lead to further feelings of inadequacy ("Church! . . . Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse."¹⁹³) or to the annoying question that plagued even Luther's conscience in his own day, "Have I done enough?" If, however, through the grace of God, sinners remain open enough to abandon all attempts at self-justification, if they come before God with empty hands and in deep humility, then, like C. S. Lewis they may be *surprised* by joy (and God's free forgiveness in the face of all the evil that we have done always appears as a surprise) as they marvel at the goodness of God's grace, the breadth of such mercy, and the richness of the divine love.

Chapter Six

The New Birth: The God of Holy Love in Us

Dost thou know what religion is? That it is a participation of the divine nature, the life of God in the soul of man: "Christ formed in the heart", "Christ in thee, the hope of glory"; happiness and holiness; heaven begun upon earth; "a kingdom of God within thee". . .

—Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley. The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:149-50.

The genius of John Wesley's theology consists in his attentiveness not only to the issues of justification and forgiveness, like the sixteenth-century reformers, but also to issues such as the new birth and holiness. Indeed, Wesley not only appropriated the insights of such eastern theologians as Pseudo-Macarius and Ephraem Syrus, but he also, interestingly enough, had *already* considered the participation motif (redemption entails participation in the life of God) in the writings of "Castaniza-Scupoli, de Renty, Gregory Lopez [and] even William Law,"¹ as well as in the writings of several German Pietists, August Hermann Francke in particular. This dual emphasis of forgiveness and renewal, then, the appreciation of the insights of both Protestantism and Catholicism (which, by the way, is one of Wesley's more salient soteriological fingerprints), is reflected not only in his understanding of grace, but in terms of faith as well. Therefore, in exploring the subject of regeneration or the new birth, we must observe in this process how both grace and faith are described by Wesley both in a similar and in a slightly different fashion from his treatment of these elements in terms of justification. Indeed, noting both these similarities and differences (and comprehending their larger significance) is a prerequisite for unraveling Wesley's sophisticated doctrine of salvation.

Regenerating Grace as the Favor of God

In terms of the new birth, our present concern, Wesley conceived the grace of God not in a monolithic sense, but in two key ways, as both the *favor* of the Most High and as *power* or *enabling presence*. However, in parsing Wesley's different understandings of grace, some modern theologians have contended that grace as *favor* informs the juridical theme of justification while grace as *power* or *enabling presence* informs the participatory theme of sanctification, both initial (regeneration) and entire (Christian perfection).² This recent construction, this division of labor if you will, is not quite accurate and lacks sufficient explanatory power. Indeed, one of the crucial truths that was mediated to Wesley by the Moravians, and one that bespeaks of the emphasis of the Halle Pietists as well, is that grace as divine *favor* informs not simply justification, but regeneration as well. More to the point, part of Wesley's breakthrough in 1738 had to do with his surprising realization that the holiness (in terms of its inception) that had so captivated his imagination since his reading of the great western sources of à Kempis, Taylor, and Law would be actualized in his life, neither by works, nor by resolve, nor by human will and effort, however well motivated or sincere, but simply and wonderfully as a result of divine graciousness and favor. This means, then, that although Wesley distinguished the two works of justification and regeneration, he nevertheless viewed these two distinct graces in a *similar* fashion in that *both* richly display the *favor* and bounty of the divine love.

The clearest and most succinct way that Wesley underscored that regenerating grace represents divine favor was by continuing the Reformation's clarion call of *sola fide* by proclaiming: "Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the *only* condition of sanctification, *exactly as* it is of justification,"³ in which the term "sanctified," understood in a broad and inclusive way (as Wesley himself sometimes did), implies both regeneration, as its inception, and entire sanctification, as its perfection. That is, sinners are justified as well as regenerated by grace through faith *alone*.

Moreover, developing a doctrine of salvation "based in part on classical Augustinian foundations (Christology, original sin, and so on),"⁴ Wesley's estimation of the grace that informs both justification and regeneration (*sola*

fide), means that the same relations that hold between preceding works (suitable for repentance, for example) and justifying faith itself are duplicated when the matter of regenerating faith is considered. Once again, such works on the approach to the new birth are not *absolutely* required, but only if there be time and opportunity, for one can be born of God without them. As a "spiritual son of the Reformation,"⁵ to use the words of Rattenbury, Wesley's postulation of *sola fide* in the context of regenerating grace demonstrated not only that the phrase "faith alone" could indeed be connected to sanctification and participatory themes, highlighting a lively, not a dead, faith, but also that free grace itself informed the realization of the new birth in the believer's life. Put another way, free grace in this context embraces the same elements that characterized justifying faith. That is, it excludes all human merit, highlights the divine role in regeneration (*only* God can regenerate a soul), demonstrates that the fruits of free grace are not given *on the basis* of prior human co-operation (as in utterly synergistic models), and reveals that one (absolutely speaking) does not have to *be* or *do* something first *in order to* be regenerated. Yet such grace, interestingly enough, is different from Calvinist views in that it is not irresistible. God's free offer of the new birth can, after all, be rejected. In light of these numerous characteristics, the parallelism between justifying and regenerating grace at this level of Wesley's practical theology is striking. In some significant ways, these distinct graces are remarkably similar. Both represent the freedom and graciousness of the Most High. Regeneration like justification is an utter *gift*.

Regenerating Grace as the Power of God

Although Wesley's doctrines of justification, regeneration, as well as entire sanctification (a point to be developed in a subsequent chapter) are all informed by the notion of grace as *favor*, highlighting divine beneficence, he avoided the possible antinomian implications (we *remain* sinners while Christ's righteousness "covers" us) of this teaching by making an important distinction between justifying and regenerating grace. In Wesley's reckoning, the former grace, on the one hand, is (and must be) imputed simply because God justifies sinners who can have no forgiveness of sins, the very meaning of justification, apart from the atoning work of Christ. The latter grace (and its consequences), on the other hand, though it, too, represents a sheer gift, not smacking of merit in the least, is not imputed but *imparted*; that is, believers *actually* become holy as a result of both divine *favor* and *enabling presence*. Such a conception of grace, in terms of both favor and power, kept Wesley's practical theology free from the charge of lawlessness and antinomianism as expressed in the Council of Trent's earlier claim that the Reformation's understanding of justification was basically a fiction. According to Outler, Wesley offered a "third alternative" that was "a fusion of imputation and impartation that included Protestant and catholic emphases and that brought him reproaches from Anglicans and Calvinists alike."⁶ Indeed, Wesley's more nuanced views on this subject not only went beyond the polemics of Trent but also affirmed key insights of seventeenth-century Pietists, Philip Spener and August Francke among them. Again, Wesley insisted that sinners are not only justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ but also *transformed* in the different work of regeneration such that, properly speaking, they become what they never were before, that is, holy.

This emphasis of regenerating grace as the power of God, as enabling presence, is evident in a number of Wesley's writings. For example, in his sermon "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," drafted in 1746, Wesley observes:

By "the grace of God" is sometimes to be understood that free love, that unmerited mercy, by which I, a sinner, through the merits of Christ am now reconciled to God. But in this place it rather means that power of God the Holy Ghost which "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." As soon as ever the grace of God (in the former sense, his pardoning love) is manifested to our soul, the grace of God (in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit) takes place therein. And now we can perform, through God, what to man was

impossible.⁷

Elsewhere, in his sermon "The Good Steward," Wesley specifies what divine empowerment entails. It is nothing less than "the power of his Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight."⁸ This participatory theme also surfaces in his notes on Acts 26:29. In this setting, Wesley underscores the impotence of human effort to make one holy by criticizing Agrippa for believing that "being a Christian . . . [was] a thing wholly in his own *power*."⁹ As a corrective to this erroneous teaching, Wesley points out that such a deep and significant transformation, a species of extraordinary grace, must necessarily be "the gift and the work of God."¹⁰ Beyond this, Wesley observes in a letter to John Downes, written in 1759, that "grace (meaning thereby that power of God which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure), . . . is 'as perceptible to the heart' . . . 'as sensible objects are to the senses.'"¹¹ These and similar considerations have led Lindström to remark: "Grace is here seen primarily as a *gratia infusa*, which effects a real, inherent change in the human soul. It is not the idea of solace, but the idea of power that molds Wesley's conception of grace."¹²

So understood, grace in the context of regeneration is the salvific strength of God made available to all who believe; it is nothing less than empowerment by the Holy Spirit for obedience to Christ. Indeed, Wesley cautioned the Methodists to beware of that pessimism and "mock humility which teacheth us to say, in excuse for our wilful disobedience, 'Oh, I can do nothing,' and stops there, without once naming the grace of God."¹³ Consequently, grace as enablement, grace as divine vigor, will not only form the basis for Wesley's relatively high standards with respect to the new birth but also underscore the human element of receiving the *initiating* grace of God. Simply put, divine empowerment, not human inability, will be the chord struck here.

The Contribution of Peter Böhler

Though Wesley was influenced by many Pietists (both Moravians and Salzburgers) during the years 1736 through 1738, it was Peter Böhler, the young Moravian missionary, who disabused Wesley of his contrived and ineffective "philosophy," as he put it, and convinced him of the error of "trying to attain salvation through a high Christian ethic."¹⁴ Several elements in Wesley's background had actually prepared him to chart such a course in the Christian life, and although the course included a generous employment of the means of grace, it was nevertheless largely moralistic in both tone and emphasis. To be sure, the Georgia journal and diary is filled with rules and resolutions, some of which were broken repeatedly, especially those that pertained to Wesley's relations with women, Sophia Hopkey in particular.

When Wesley was back in England, Böhler pointed the way forward (by building upon the foundation laid by some of the Salzburgers in Georgia), not by introducing him to the doctrine of *sola fide* itself, for Wesley as a good Anglican should have already been well acquainted with such a teaching, but by challenging him to see *sola fide* "as a personal demand for decision."¹⁵ This challenge came in the form of the specific teaching that saving faith (which embraces both justification and regeneration) had two *fruits* ever associated with it, namely, *happiness* and *holiness*, or, to put it another way, *peace*, flowing from a sense of forgiveness, and *power*, issuing from the invigorating presence of the Holy Spirit. At first, Wesley balked at conceiving saving faith in this way ("I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new gospel."¹⁶). However, after consulting Scripture and conversing with several Moravian witnesses, Wesley was convinced "that a true, living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present sins."¹⁷ And these numerous testimonies added with one voice that "this faith was the gift, the free gift of God."¹⁸ The principal Moravian contribution, then, consists in seeing regenerating faith not only as divine *favor*, as a gift bestowed upon believers, but also as divine *power*, an enabling presence marked by the Holy Spirit within us.

Remarkably enough, such an understanding of saving faith that includes both happiness (peace) and holiness (power) is embedded in Wesley's famous Aldersgate account of his evangelical conversion, especially in his observations, "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ *alone* [my italics] for salvation, and an

assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."¹⁹ Podmore contends not only that Wesley's record of this event demonstrates the importance of the Moravian influence, but also that the last phrase, a clear reference to the Pauline phrase "under the law," was "how the Moravians described those who did not accept their approach."²⁰ The proper Christian faith, in other words, led not only to happiness and forgiveness but to holiness as well. "[The year] 1738 was Wesley's theological *annus mirabilis* (miraculous year)," Outler notes, "and Aldersgate was the dramatic moment in that year when he reversed the priorities between *sola fide* and holy living, never to reverse them again."²¹ Or as George Croft Cell put it in his own day, "This new reservoir of power was unlocked for Wesley by the Luther-Calvin idea of faith."²²

Defining Regeneration

Of what he termed the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, such things as original sin, justification by faith, the new birth, and holiness of heart and life, Wesley repeatedly stressed two in particular, as revealed in his observation, namely, "The Marks of the New Birth," and "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God," was later modified, suggesting, as he puts it, "changes in his convictions."¹⁴⁶ But as the appeal to the "later" or even the reputed "whole" Wesley was problematic in terms of a proper understanding of the faith of a servant, so, too, is it equally troubling with respect to the standard of the liberty of the children of God as Wesley himself had understood it. Simply put, as the standards go, so go the promises. The two are inextricably connected.

If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental they are doubtless these two—the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work which God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins; the latter to the great work which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature.²³

That is, following the lead of the Anglican Reformation, especially the *Thirty-nine Articles*, Wesley affirmed that justification, on the one hand, is a relative change, one that entails a different *relation* to God. Regeneration, on the other hand, is a real change, for "in begetting us again [God] does the work *in us*."²⁴ Moreover, the Great Evangelical Revival in Britain, of which Wesley, Whitefield, Cennick, and others played an important part, posed the "problem" of the new birth for these preachers in a very pointed way. Indeed, "as tensions in the Revival mounted," as Outler observed, "between the claims of nominal Christians to [an exclusive] baptismal regeneration (meaning there could be no new birth subsequent to infant baptism) and the claims of evangelicals to 'conversion,' "²⁵ Wesley, in particular, felt increasingly compelled to state carefully his own views on this matter.

Justification	Regeneration
Implies a Relative Change	Implies a Real Change
God Does Something "For Us"	God Does Something "In Us"
Changes Our Outward Relation to God	Changes Our Inmost Souls So That We Become Saints

Restores Us to the Favor of God	Restores Us to the Image of God
Takes Away the Guilt of Sin	Takes Away the Power of Sin ²⁶

Though the phrase "being born again," or "being born from above,"²⁷ is most often associated with Jesus in his late-night dialog with Nicodemus (John 3), the expression itself was already prominent among Jews during the intertestamental period, and it referred to Gentiles who had converted to Judaism.²⁸ Thus, when an adult male was convinced of the Jewish faith, he was baptized before he was circumcised. At baptism, he was said to be born again, by which the Jewish community meant that "he who was before a child of the devil was now adopted into the family of God."²⁹ What, therefore, made the subsequent baptismal practices of John the Baptist so radical (and Christian baptism in terms of Jews) was that not the "heathen" but Jews, religious folk, members of the covenant community, were called to both repentance and conversion (*metanoia*). Therefore, the practice of John the Baptist taking a traditional Jewish ritual and investing it with new meaning (by calling the "righteous" to repentance) prepared the way for a better understanding of early Christian practice that was likewise a call (certainly as experienced by Jews) from an older, more formal religion to new life in the Spirit.

Working with these meanings, Wesley sets up an analogy in his writings between natural birth, on the one hand, and spiritual birth, on the other. The new birth "is that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life: when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness."³⁰ In quickening the soul, God brings its senses to life, such that they perceive the spiritual realm in general and the divine love in particular. Again, drawing a comparison with natural birth, what the Jews considered "being born of water," Wesley elaborates:

The child which is not yet born subsists indeed by the air, as does everything which has life; but *feels* it not, nor anything else, unless in a very dull and imperfect manner. It *hears* little, if at all, the organs of hearing being as yet closed up. It *sees* nothing, having its eyes fast shut, and being surrounded with utter darkness. There are, it may be, some faint beginnings of life when the time of its birth draws nigh, and some motion consequent thereon, whereby it is distinguished from a mere mass of matter. But it has no *senses*.³¹

In light of these dynamics, Runyon aptly notes that the new birth, for Wesley, in addition to everything else, was "an epistemological event that opens up a new

way of knowing."³² The avenue of such spiritually discerned knowledge was, of course, faith, now seen as a spiritual sense in terms of the seeing eye and the hearing ear. And though Wesley's views on this score have often been understood in a Lockean, utterly empiricist way, it is perhaps best not to press this comparison too far or in an exclusive manner, for there are important differences as well. For one thing, though empiricism has often been presented as an "objective" approach to knowledge, in which the mind is at the center of the knowing process, Wesley's tack is on some levels subjective and participatory, in that the truths that emerge out of the awakening of the new birth cannot be known apart from *transformation*.³³

At any rate, along with the quickening of spiritual senses that were dormant prior to regeneration, Wesley maintains that such a conversion is not simply outward but is inward as well—a change from unholy tempers or dispositions to holy ones, from pride to humility, from passionateness to meekness, from peevishness and discontent to patience and resignation. The seeds of *every* holy temper are then implanted in the soul. As such, regeneration, as Wesley employed the term in relation to justification,³⁴ is not the entirety of sanctification, but only its beginning. William Law, however, had confused the distinctiveness of the new birth with the larger process of sanctification, especially in his *The Grounds and Reasons of Christian Perfection*. In this treatise, Law took regeneration to be an incremental, processive work and therefore identified it with "the whole, gradual progress of sanctification."³⁵ In response, Wesley corrected his one-time mentor by stating, "No; it is only the threshold of sanctification—the first entrance upon it."³⁶ Again, Wesley insisted that the new birth is a discrete event, "it is a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate to it, the entrance into it."³⁷ Without these distinctions in place, Wesley feared that neither the new birth nor entire sanctification would be properly understood. And if the beginning of holiness in the form of the new birth was misunderstood, then little hope remained in comprehending the height and the depth of entire sanctification aright.

Having *received* the gift of the new birth first, which in a real sense is the work of God *alone* (free grace), believers are then empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their hearts to engage in divine/human cooperation, whereby the ongoing Christian life is understood in terms of "God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, the reaction of the soul upon God."³⁸ Moreover, for

Wesley, this dynamic flow of the Christian life as believers respond to prior divine initiatives (prevenience understood in a broad sense) also entails an imperative dimension. In other words, having been gifted by receiving God's prior grace, believers now have an obligation to work, to improve the rich grace of the Most High, and thereby to recognize "the absolute necessity of this reaction of the soul (whatsoever it be called) in order to the continuance of the divine life therein."³⁹ Indeed, if believers fail in this, then they run the risk of losing what *gifts* they already have. Developing the parable of the talents along these lines, Wesley cautions:

[W]hoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it. God will continue, yea, will give it more abundantly; whereas whoever does not improve this talent cannot possibly retain it. Notwithstanding all he can do, it will infallibly be taken away from him.⁴⁰

And to drive home this important truth of the gospel, Wesley was fond of quoting St. Augustine who had written: "He that made us without ourselves will not save us without ourselves."⁴¹

The co-operant or responsible grace at this point of the *ordo salutis* reveals that there is no standing still, so to speak, in the Christian life, that the way is ever forward. Thus, in Wesley's practical theology, a "dialectical tension" emerges, to use the words of Clarence Bence, "between present attainment and future expectation throughout the entire order of salvation."⁴² Each actualization of grace, then, opens up the possibility of more. And though the new birth (or conversion for that matter) does indeed mark an important point along the journey, it is not a resting place. Instead, it is an invitation to both present and future growth in grace, to the improvement of the tempers of holy love reigning in the heart and displayed in the community of faith.

It is precisely at the nexus of justification and the new birth, and the Christian life that follows, that Wesley's major conjunction of free (the work of God alone) and responsible grace (divine and human working) is most evident. On the one hand, Wesley's carefully articulated balance here, easily misunderstood, was not apparent in some post-Reformation theologies that, in their zeal to prevent persons from having any share of merit in redemption, basically overreacted and thereby eliminated the very subjective elements (the freedom to stretch out one's hand to *receive* saving grace, for example, though not, of course, considered a "work") that constitute, in part, the integrity of personhood as a reflection of the *imago Dei* itself. On the other hand, semi-Pelagian approaches likewise failed to hold Wesley's important conjunction in place by subsuming the entirety of

redemption under an overarching synergistic paradigm that left no place for free grace. And though some approaches have appealed to the priority or prevenience of divine action (as if such an appeal resolved all the pertinent issues), they nevertheless insisted that God *never* works alone, one of the very elements of free grace itself. In contrast, Wesley's conjunctive view draws from the insights of both the catholic tradition (co-operant grace) and the heritage of the Reformation (free grace) to offer a view of redemption that underscores not only the importance of receiving what gifts come from God alone, but also the value of responding, once such gifts are received, to the ongoing initiatives of the Most High.

Moreover, this leading conjunction in Wesley's theology can be expressed in terms of faith and holy love, where pardon is viewed as leading to participation, and where faith alone aims at holy living as its completion, its very perfection. To be sure, by drawing together the insights of such leaders of the Reformation as Luther (through Moravian and Halle Pietists) and Cranmer (through homilies, liturgy, and articles) and wedding them to those of the holy living tradition as represented by à Kempis, Taylor, Law, Castaniza-Scupoli, de Renty, Gregory Lopez, Don Juan d'Avila, and Archbishop Fenelon, Wesley articulated an understanding of the Christian life that began in grace and freedom and that was empowered to work by love. Outler summarizes all these elements in his pithy phrase, representing a *diversity* of traditions: "faith alone, working by love, aimed at holy living."⁴³

The New Birth as a Necessary Change

Just as Wesley linked the doctrines of justification and regeneration, so, too, did he link regeneration with the doctrine of original sin. In other words, as justification and the new birth are the foundation of the Christian life, so, too, is the doctrine of original sin the foundation of the new birth. In his sermon "The New Birth," for example, produced in 1760, Wesley observes: "This then is the foundation of the new birth—the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is 'that being born in sin' we 'must be born again' . . . everyone that is born of a woman must be born of the Spirit of God."⁴⁴ And a few years earlier, Wesley affirmed the same linkage, but this time he employed the specific language of regeneration, indicating at least in this context that he used the phrases "the new birth" and "regeneration" interchangeably. "And as the corruption of our nature evidences the absolute necessity of *regeneration*," he notes, "so the necessity of *regeneration* proves the corruption of our nature."⁴⁵ And elsewhere Wesley adds: "Know your disease! Know your cure! Ye were born in sin; therefore 'ye must be born again', 'born of God.'"⁴⁶ So then, with this particular linkage in place, we are now able to understand precisely why Wesley took such great pains to articulate his doctrine of original sin and there by produce one of his largest theological treatises ever. That is, if the problem of original sin were misprized or even outright repudiated, then the solution of the new birth would be misprized as well.

Wesley's preferred way, however, of underscoring the necessity of the new birth for holiness, and thus for salvation as well, often entailed a reference to, and at times even a commentary on, John 3:3, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." For example, in 1781, writing to his nephew Charles, John Wesley noted: "You are good-humoured, mild, and harmless; but *unless you are born again*, you cannot see the kingdom of God! But ask, and you shall receive; for it is nigh at hand."⁴⁷ And a few years later in 1784, Wesley corresponded with another nephew, this time Samuel Wesley—who, by the way, was accomplished in many respects and was undoubtedly the product of a godly home—and cautioned him along the following lines: "I feared you were not born again; and 'except a man be born again,' if we may credit the Son of God, 'he cannot see the kingdom of heaven' except he experience that inward change of the earthly, sensual mind for the

mind which was in Christ Jesus."⁴⁸

Moreover, Wesley affirmed the necessity of the new birth for holiness by pointing out that if justification were separated from regeneration, as if the forgiveness of sins could possibly be received apart from a concomitant renewal,⁴⁹ then even "if all your past sins were now to be forgiven," he notes, "you would immediately sin again; that is, unless your heart were cleansed; unless it were created anew."⁵⁰ And Wesley repeated this counsel in a letter to John Valton, drafted in 1764, in which he cautioned: "The *inward change* is the one thing needful for *you* [Wesley's emphasis]. You must be born again, or *you will never gain an uniform and lasting liberty* [my italics]."⁵¹ Indeed, even Luther himself saw the necessity of such transformation and complained shortly before his death that "'the people that are called by my name . . . are reformed as to their opinions and modes of worship; but their tempers and lives are the same they were before.'"⁵² For his part, Wesley contended that the imagination faith (or the forgiveness of sins for that matter) supersedes holiness is the very "marrow of antinomianism."⁵³

In a slightly different fashion, Wesley stressed the necessity of the new birth, not simply for holiness, but for happiness as well. Given the order that a God of holy love has established in creation in terms of its fitness of relations, "it is not possible in the nature of things," Wesley noted, "that a man should be happy who is not holy."⁵⁴ Even the poor ungodly poet [Juvenal in his *Satires*] could tell us," Wesley observes, "*Nemo malus felix*—no wicked man is happy. The reason is plain: all unholy tempers are uneasy tempers."⁵⁵ That is, as long as pride, self-will, and idolatry, these general sources of misery, *reign* in the heart, there can be no place for happiness. But these unholy tempers must reign, Wesley points out, "till the bent of our nature is changed, that is, till we are born again."⁵⁶ Here, a familiar idiom has been given a slightly different modulation: being born in misery, we must be born again.

The New Birth as a Vast Change

In his *Farther Appeal*, written in 1745, Wesley describes the new birth as a "vast, inward change";⁵⁷ the following year, "as a vast and mighty change, a change 'from darkness to light,' as well as 'from the power of Satan unto God.'"⁵⁸ In commenting once again on John 3:3, Wesley depicts the new birth in a similar fashion as "an entire change of heart as well as of life."⁵⁹ However, this emphasis on the magnitude of the change entailed in the new birth, its entirety, is perhaps expressed most clearly, once again, in Wesley's sermon "The New Birth," written in 1760, in which he writes:

From hence it manifestly appears what is the nature of the new birth. It is that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life: when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is "created anew in Christ Jesus."⁶⁰

In this context, then, the totality of the change of the new birth refers not to the entirety of the process of sanctification (as in other usages of Wesley), but to the integrity, the thoroughness, of its beginning. Speaking in a natural way, just as when a child is born, the completeness of this work is not mistaken for subsequent growth and maturity, so, too, spiritually speaking, the new birth is a complete work, in the sense of its nature and integrity, a work that nevertheless admits of further growth in grace. In fact, not only did Wesley draw an analogy between natural birth and spiritual birth,⁶¹ but also he pressed this analogy to illuminate precisely his teaching on the thoroughgoing change of regeneration. However, Wesley begins the analogy not with natural birth, as one would expect, but with spiritual birth, and he then works backward to draw the relation to natural birth in order to highlight the thoroughness of the latter. He writes: "for that which is regenerated was also generated or begotten; but the whole man is regenerated, there fore the whole man is ⁶² The new birth, then, is not a partial change, but an entire, general, universal change; it is that change whereby a soul moves from the death of sin to life in God.

In light of these preceding observations, it is clear that Wesley was skeptical with respect to those who had claimed even in his own day that they had always been a Christian or that never had there been a time when they needed such a change. "By this also," Wesley cautioned, "if he give himself leave to think, may

he know that he is not born of the Spirit, that he has never yet known God, but has mistaken the voice of nature for the voice of God."[63](#)

The Influence of German Pietism

The importance of genuine, personal renewal for the sake of holiness was a theme Methodism shared with Pietists from both Halle and Herrnhut. According to Howard Snyder, some of the common elements of all three movements were a stress on regeneration, personal religious experience, piety, holiness, and discipline,⁶⁴ among other things. In a similar fashion, Martin Schmidt claimed that *Wiedergeburt* (the new birth) was the underlying motif of much of Pietistic theology, and this emphasis streamed into Wesley's theology, largely through his readings at Oxford and in Georgia.⁶⁵ And Dale Brown, for his part, maintained that the growth of Pietism in the seventeenth century marked a shift of emphasis "from justification to regeneration,"⁶⁶ in other words, a shift from juridical themes to participatory ones, a shift in some sense duplicated in Wesley's theology as well in which the forgiveness of sins had to be matched by renewal in life. In fact, one of the favorite texts of the Pietists was 2 Corinthians 5:17 ("So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"), a text that was alluded to several times in Wesley's published sermons and one that became the principal heading for "On Sin in Believers," as well.⁶⁷

What Wesley likely found most attractive in German Pietism, especially from Halle and precursory movements, was the strong association of the new birth and the reform of the church, in other words, that renewal must begin with the inculcation of holiness. For example, Johann Arndt, who had an enormous influence on Philip Jacob Spener, the father of German Pietism, sought to revitalize the church of his own day by calling nominal Christianity into account in light of the graces of regeneration and what he termed the proper Christian faith,⁶⁸ an idiom that Wesley developed as well. "Because men call themselves Christians and yet do not act as Christians," Arndt warned, "Christ is denied, mocked, despised, insulted, beaten, crucified, cut off, and killed as the Epistle to Hebrews 6:6 states that some men crucify and mock the Son of God again."⁶⁹ Again, this German spiritual leader insisted that "true Christianity consists only in pure faith, and a holy life."⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, the themes of personal reform, the repudiation of nominal Christianity, criticism of doctrinal provincialism, and the stress on regeneration—all championed by the later Pietists—were already present in Arndt's *Wahres Christenthum* (True Christianity) as early as 1610.⁷¹

Observe the opening lines of this work and the emphasis which they place on the practice of the Christian life:

Dear Christian reader, that the holy Gospel is subjected, in our time, to great and shameful abuse is fully proved by the impenitent life of the ungodly who praise Christ and his word with their mouths and yet lead an unchristian life that is like that of persons who dwell in heathendom, not in the Christian world.⁷²

Undoubtedly, Arndt's work was immensely popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and eventually became a staple of German piety. In fact, in many German homes of this period, *True Christianity* found its place right alongside the Bible. Across the continent, in England, *True Christianity* was known "as early as 1648."⁷³ In time, however, the Halle Pietist Anthony William Boehm (1673–1722)—not to be confused with Jakob Boehme (1575–1624)—translated this work into English and promptly submitted a copy to the Queen along with a suitable preface.⁷⁴ Judging from the evidence culled from his diary, one is likely to conclude that Wesley read *True Christianity* shortly after his arrival in Georgia. The diary, for instance, records his reading of Arndt on 24 March 1736 and his finishing this task on 31 March 1736.⁷⁵ Moreover, Wesley was acquainted with this same work through his contacts with the Moravians during the summer of 1738. So impressed was Wesley with Arndt's work that he included an extract of it in his first volume of the *Christian Library*.⁷⁶

Philip Jacob Spener read Arndt's *True Christianity* and probably had been introduced to it by Joachim Stoll.⁷⁷ This work informed much of Spener's thought throughout his life, for its emphases were remarkably similar to the task that he hoped to accomplish: namely, to engender reform in both civic and ecclesiastical life. Like Arndt, Spener was faced with the problem of nominal Christianity often left in the wake of a state church in which the formalism of an *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments and doctrinal rigidity had already begun to sap a church's life. Like Arndt, Spener met this challenge by differentiating "true" Christianity from formal Christianity,⁷⁸ by emphasizing that the essence of Christianity consists in a personal relationship to God⁷⁹ and by centering his theological concerns not so much around the forensic issues of justification, but once again around the participatory issues of regeneration and a holy life. As Tappert points out in an introduction to Spener's *Pia Desideria* (Pious Desires), "Characteristic of this tradition is the central place given to regeneration (a biological image) instead of justification (a forensic image)."⁸⁰ Or as Brown puts it, "Regeneration was for Spener what justification had been for Luther and he

began his ministry at Berlin with sixty-two sermons on *Wiedergeburt*."⁸¹ Moreover, Nagler argues that Spener, as the avowed successor of Arndt, employed "mystical phraseology, emphasizing Christ *in* us as well as Christ *for* us,"⁸² a distinction that surfaced in Wesley's writings as well.

As a gifted and insightful leader, Spener realized that the heady days of the Reformation were clearly over and that the great threat to vital Christianity was no longer doctrinal dissolution but the compromised and sinful "Christian" lives that created a stumbling block for those outside the church. In short, Spener's work marks a continuation and development of an Arndtian piety that was already well known.⁸³ And though there is no direct evidence that Wesley ever read the *Pia Desideria* (This classic did not even appear in an English translation until Tappert's edition in 1964.⁸⁴), some of the principal themes of Spener were mediated to Wesley through his reading the writings of Arndt (who influenced Spener) and of August Hermann Francke (who was the protégé of Spener).

Other Pietist influences on Wesley's understanding of regeneration include several conversations that Wesley had with the Salzburgers Johann Martian Bolzius and Israel Christian Gronau while he was in Georgia. Both men had served as teachers under Francke in the Orphan House at Halle, and both were ordained in Germany specifically for the American mission. The phrase "vital piety" best describes their Christian witness in thought and practice. Beyond this, the stream of Württemberger Pietism, represented by Johann Albrecht Bengel, likewise informed Wesley's theological reflections, especially in terms of his *Notes Upon the New Testament*, a work that incorporated several of the insights of Bengel, especially in terms of the importance of regeneration and the theme of real Christianity.⁸⁵

In light of this preceding evidence, Wesley likely learned the significance of the participatory theme of renewal, specifically in terms of the new birth, from German Protestants who, steeped in the reforms of the sixteenth century, realized that an ongoing reformation of both heart and life was vital for the inculcation, the very beginning, of the proper Christian faith.

The New Birth as a Crucial Change

Just as Wesley defined saving faith by distinguishing it from what it is not, so, too, did he explore the crucial nature of the new birth by contrasting it with a number of elements that were often mistaken for vital Christian faith. First of all, the new birth does not consist simply in holding the deposit of faith or the apostolic testimony *as an opinion*. As Wesley put it, "orthodoxy, or right opinions, is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all."⁸⁶ Lest there be misunderstanding it must be quickly noted that Wesley did not neglect the value of sound doctrine, for he also wrote, "wrong opinions in religion naturally lead to wrong tempers, or wrong practices; and that consequently it is our bounden duty to pray that we may have a right judgment in all things."⁸⁷ Indeed, Latitudinarianism in doctrine, a very broad and loose way, is not a blessing but a curse. But one must not remain at the level of simple orthodoxy, and so Wesley stressed the inculcation of all holy tempers, as the essence of a lively faith, the seeds of which are planted in the new birth. "This alone is true Christian religion," Wesley wrote, "Not this or that opinion, or system of opinions, be they ever so true, ever so scriptural."⁸⁸ Even more emphatically, he contended that those who make orthodoxy the substance, the very heart of religion, are "given up to a strong delusion,"⁸⁹ a judgment similar to that made by Pietists a century earlier.

Second, keeping in mind the simple truth that Jesus himself taught that unless a person is born again he or she shall not enter the kingdom of God, Wesley distinguished this narrow way from the broad way of respectable virtue and of socially accepted morality that was offered at times within the church, and in some very subtle ways, as a substitute for regeneration. "Thousands do really believe," Wesley observes, "that they have found a 'broad way which leadeth' not 'to destruction.' What danger, say they, can a woman be in, that is so *harmless* and so *virtuous*? What fear is there that so *honest* a man, one of so strict *morality*, should miss of heaven."⁹⁰ Yet another ill-guided path consisted in mistaking the natural abilities gained "by a liberal education,"⁹¹ as Wesley put it, for the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit:

Let them be ever so accomplished in other respects, let them be ever so learned, ever so well versed in every branch of polite literature; yea, ever so courteous, so humane; yet if their eye is not singly fixed on God they can know nothing of

scriptural religion. They do not even know what Christian holiness means; what is the entrance of it, 'the new birth,' with all the circumstances attending it."⁹²

And in a note that some may suggest smacks of sarcasm, Wesley added: "They know no more of this [change] than do the beasts of the field."⁹³ Thus, the new birth, in Wesley's estimation, far exceeds "that honesty, justice, and whatever is called 'morality' (though excellent in its place)."⁹⁴ In fact, late in life, reflecting on his own early experience, Wesley testified that even when he "had been in Orders many years," he was "not clear with regard to the doctrine of the New Birth."⁹⁵

Third, many in the Church of England looked upon eighteenth-century Methodism with its open-air preaching and its call for scriptural Christianity as fanatical, and they therefore took comfort in the regular path of attendance upon the means of grace, the Lord's Supper, in particular. But Wesley, surprisingly enough, responded to this approach, if it neglected the very heart of religion, by noting that "using every means of grace at every opportunity, and doing all possible good to all men; yet a man may go this far, may do all this, and be but a Heathen still."⁹⁶ What some Anglican clergy simply could not comprehend was how members of the church could employ the means of grace for years and yet lack regenerating, saving grace. But this presumption is precisely what Methodism called into question in the name of reform and in its concern for spreading scriptural holiness across the land. Wesley reasoned:

Go to church twice a day, go to the Lord's table every week, say ever so many prayers in private; hear ever so many sermons, good sermons, excellent sermons, the best that ever were preached; read ever so many good books—still you must be born again. None of these things will stand in the place of the new birth. No, nor anything under heaven. Let this, therefore, if you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer, "Lord, add this to all thy blessings: let me be 'born again.'"⁹⁷

And again Wesley cautioned against "putting something else in its [vital religion's] place, by encouraging him to rest in the form, notions, or externals, without being born again, without having Christ in him, the hope of glory."⁹⁸

So then, in displaying the crucial nature of the new birth, that is, in distinguishing it from holding correct opinions; practicing common, acceptable virtue; and even employing all the means of grace, Wesley underscored the basic gospel truth, gladly received by those who knew their need, that the new birth is not a natural change, one that could be brought about merely by human works,

will, or design, but a *supernatural* change, a truth that was not always welcomed by a settled clergy who had grown accustomed to the habits, indeed the familiarity, of the rounds of religion. To illustrate, Reverend Potter, in distaining what he took to be some of the excesses of the Methodists, accused this people of pretending to "the grace of a miraculous conversion," a charge to which Wesley replied: "Is there any conversion that is not miraculous? Is conversion a natural or supernatural work? I suppose all who allow there is any such thing believe it to be supernatural."⁹⁹ Moreover, in a letter to the Reverend John Downes, Rector of St. Michael's, Wesley insisted that the new birth is "as miraculous or supernatural a work now as it was seventeen hundred years ago."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, a few years earlier, Wesley had already noted in his commentary on John 3:3 that the new birth is nothing less than experiencing and enjoying "the inward or the glorious kingdom of God."¹⁰¹

Regeneration, then, or what can be called initial sanctification, marks the beginning not simply of an incremental change, not merely one of degree, but of a qualitative change that issues in a distinct kind of life, a life that men and women cannot bring about by themselves. In fact, Wesley so highlights this supernatural change that he maintains repeatedly throughout his writings that spiritual life itself commences when we are born again.¹⁰²

The Contribution of August Hermann Francke

It is likely that Wesley garnered some of his views on the new birth and conversion from the writings of August Hermann Francke, German Pietist and Lübeck native. In a way similar to Wesley, Francke claimed that "nothing is a more fatal hindrance of a man's salvation, than the false conceit that he is already a Christian."¹⁰³ In fact, Francke made a distinction between the converted and the unconverted that was paralleled in Wesley's parsing of an almost Christian and a real one.¹⁰⁴ Again, like Wesley, Francke not only realized that he himself did not have the faith that he was preaching¹⁰⁵ but also had a momentous conversion and a faith that went beyond the virtues of formal, outward religion or ecclesiastical convention. Compare, for example, Francke's following personal testimony of his conversion to that of Wesley's own well-known Aldersgate experience:

Then the Lord, the living God, as I was still upon my knees, heard me upon his holy throne. So great was his fatherly love, that he did not relieve me gradually of such doubt and inquietude of heart, which would have been enough for me. But in order that I might be the more fully convinced, . . . he heard me suddenly. . . . In my heart I was assured of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁶

In observing these and other similarities, Sung-Duk Lee contends that the flow of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* has its imprint more from Halle than from Herrnhut. In particular, Lee argues that the balance of process and instantaneousness found in Wesley's practical theology is not indicative of Zinzendorf's "*Minuten Begnadigung*" (Minutes of Pardon), with its focus on a single event or crisis. Instead, the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*, in its emphasis on prevenient grace, in a broad sense, is similar to that of Francke in that it indicates in what ways seekers are prepared, if there be time and opportunity, for subsequent crucial actualizations of grace such as are entailed in the new birth. Indeed, Francke's "*Ordnung Gottes*" (Order of God), Lee contends, unfolds as "prevenient grace, convincing grace, *Bußkampf* (or penitential struggle), justification and sanctification,"¹⁰⁷ a soteriological fingerprint that is familiar to many Methodists both past and present. However, Lee does not deny the significance of crucial moments in the *ordo salutis* that were so important both to Francke and Wesley. He simply maintains that such moments must be understood as both preceded and followed by process in a dynamic way.¹⁰⁸

Beyond this, Lee demonstrates quite clearly that Halle Pietism, again as represented by Francke, developed a view of the Christian life that, since it entailed ongoing growth after conversion, also involved increasing levels of holiness. In other words, though Francke (and Wesley we might add) recognized conversion as a decisive turning point in Christian existence, believers still had to grow *in* holiness.¹⁰⁹ This means, then, that Wesley likely learned the participatory motif of ongoing growth in grace, from one degree of holiness to another, not simply from catholic sources Fenelon and Molinos, for example, or from the Eastern Fathers, but also from Protestant ones, the writings of German Pietists in particular.

With such similarities in place, it is not surprising to learn that Wesley read several of Francke's writings with keen interest—and one at least several times (*Pietas Hallensis*). Accordingly, Wesley's Oxford diaries and financial records reveal that he explored all of the following of Francke's works in a relatively short period of time: "*Christus sacrae scripturae nucleus* (September, 1732); *Manductio ad Lectionem scripturae sacrae* (July, 1733); *Nicodemus: or, a Treatise Against the Fear of Man* (November, 1733); and *Pietas Hallensis* (May, 1734)."¹¹⁰ And as Snyder points out, the first two were studied in the Holy Club as one of its goads to vital divinity.¹¹¹ And when Wesley traveled to Georgia, he took Francke's *Nicodemus* as well as his *Pietas Hallensis* with him. Such works prepared Wesley in some important respects for all that was yet to come. As Francke had put it in his *Nicodemus*, "Let no man deceive himself. There is no true faith, without holiness of heart and life."¹¹²

The Temporal Elements as Key

Perhaps Wesley's favorite way of underscoring the crucial nature of the new birth was to distinguish it from the larger process of sanctification and then to demonstrate, quite clearly, the significance of its temporal elements. For example, in his treatise on original sin, produced in 1756, Wesley notes:

But regeneration is not "gaining habits of holiness;" it is quite a different thing. It is not a natural, but a *supernatural* change; and is *just as different from the gradual "gaining habits,"* as a child's being born into the world is from his growing up into a man. The new birth is not, as you suppose, the progress, or the whole, of sanctification, but the beginning of it.^{[113](#)}

It should be apparent by now that since Wesley distinguished the new birth from the process of sanctification, then he must have also considered, by way of corollary, the new birth itself to be a decisive, instantaneous event. And this is precisely what is found throughout his writings. Thus, in a letter to John Downes drafted in 1759, Wesley not only underscores the supernatural flavor of this work, a commonplace by now, but also indicates something of the temporal elements involved:

We do believe regeneration (or, in plain English, the new birth) to be as miraculous or supernatural a work now as it was seventeen hundred years ago. We likewise believe that the spiritual life, which commences when we are born again, must in the nature of the thing have a first moment as well as the natural.^{[114](#)}

The following year in his sermon "The New Birth," Wesley depicts the instantaneousness of regeneration against the backdrop of the process of sanctification and indicates that the former is a momentous aspect of the latter. Drawing a by-now-familiar analogy between natural birth and spiritual birth in this piece, Wesley points out that a child is born of woman "in a moment, or at least in a very short time."^{[115](#)} After this, the child continues to grow until it reaches maturity. In the same way, he argues, "a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterward grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ."^{[116](#)} And during this same year, Wesley, in a letter to Miss March, held both instantaneousness and process together in a careful conjunctive tension: "Every one, though born of God in an instant, yea and sanctified in an instant, yet undoubtedly grows by slow degrees, both after

the former and the latter change."¹¹⁷

The relation, then, which holds between natural birth and maturation is similar to the relation between the new birth and sanctification. That is, Wesley is attentive to the crisis of the new birth, the instantaneous, miraculous element, *and* to the process of sanctification, the gradual element. Both aspects are acknowledged; neither, therefore, should be neglected. Moreover, this instantaneous emphasis is a concern not simply of the middle-aged Wesley, but of the elderly Wesley as well. Notice, for example, in the following selection from "The Scripture Way of Salvation," which was produced in 1765, how Wesley never repudiates the instantaneousness and therefore the discreteness of the new birth. He writes: "At the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very *moment*, *sanctification* begins. In that *instant* we are 'born again,' 'born from above', 'born of the Spirit.'"¹¹⁸ The key, perhaps, to unraveling Wesley's larger thought here is found in his further identification of the instantaneous element with inward religion, that is, of the association of a moment of grace, so to speak, with the activity of God. Thus, in an important letter to Mary Bosanquet, written in 1775, Wesley maintains that "inward holiness is mostly instantaneous . . . but outward holiness is mostly gradual."¹¹⁹ The former aspect refers to divine activity in terms of the gifts of grace and holiness; the latter points to human co-operant activity, to works of piety, mercy, and the like, that flow from, if there be time and opportunity, the reception of these gifts.

So then, the problem with many recent interpretations of Wesley's thought on this score is that they conceive the language of "moment," "instant," and the like simply in a chronological sense while Wesley uses such terminology also, and more importantly, in a soteriological sense. In other words, this language highlights not human response over time, but the graciousness and efficacy of divine initiative, which must be received *first* before there can be any appropriate response. That is, the instantaneous elements of Wesley's *ordo salutis* are his principal vehicles for underscoring the crucial truth that it is God, not humanity, who both forgives sins and who makes holy. *Temporal elements, in other words, indicate soteriological roles.*

The New Birth as Liberating Change: The Second Liberty of the Gospel

When Wesley sought to give greater precision to his understanding of the new birth, he employed three marks or traits of this distinct measure of grace, namely, faith, hope, and love. Concerning faith, the first mark, Wesley reiterated the themes that faith is not only an assent to divine truth, but also a confidence in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. A new emphasis, however, emerges in his comments that a fruit of this faith through which one is born again, and which cannot be separated from it, is freedom from the power of sin: "power over *outward sin* of every kind; over every evil word and work . . . And over *inward sin*."¹²⁰ This is the second great liberty of the gospel and one both taught and preached by Wesley for much of his career. Judging from the evidence in his journal, we can conclude that this teaching was perhaps first communicated to Wesley once again by Peter Böhler who maintained that one of the salient fruits of saving faith was "dominion over sin"¹²¹—a teaching that ¹²² In fact, not long after his Aldersgate experience Wesley wrote to his brother, Samuel, Jr. and exclaimed: "By a Christian I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him. And in this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian till May 24th last past."¹²³

But in order not to misconstrue Wesley's doctrine on this crucial issue of sin and grace, we must, first of all, describe in some detail precisely what is meant by sin, properly defined. In a letter to Mrs. Bennis in 1772, Wesley offers a working definition of sin, which expounds upon some of his earlier notions. He writes:

Nothing is sin, strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. Therefore every voluntary breach of the law of love is sin; and nothing else, if we speak properly. To strain the matter farther is only to make way for Calvinism. There may be ten thousand wandering thoughts and forgetful intervals without any breach of love, though not without transgressing the Adamic law. But Calvinists would fain confound these together.¹²⁴

Two elements are of particular interest in this definition. First, observe that Wesley defines sin as a *voluntary* transgression of the law; that is, the will must be engaged; it must give its assent in order for sin to occur. All unwitting mistakes and errors, therefore, though they may be transgressions of the law of

God, are not sins, properly speaking, if willful intent is lacking.

Second, notice also that Wesley defines sin in terms of the revealed and written law of God. And although, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, there is a "law pause" in Wesley's doctrine of salvation with respect to justification, the moral law is immediately back in the picture with respect to regeneration. Thus, not only is the moral law the standard by which Wesley will judge the Christian life—similar to Calvin's *tertius usus*—but obedience to God through the moral law (although never as the basis of acceptance) is also a constant *fruit* of that faith that regenerates. Indeed, that the moral law has a normative role to play in the Christian life is borne out in Wesley's observation that the moral law "is supreme, unchangeable reason; it is unalterable rectitude; it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created,"¹²⁵ and also in his association of the moral law with both reason and religion as demonstrated in his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*: "This is the very religion we preach," Wesley writes, "a religion evidently founded on, and every way agreeable to, eternal reason, to the essential nature of things. Its foundation stands on the nature of God and the nature of man, together with their mutual relations."¹²⁶ However, note also that the considerable role for the moral law here does not indicate that Wesley failed to understand the holy love of God and neighbor in relational terms; it simply means that the moral law is ever indicative of the soundness of that relation ship.¹²⁷

When some of Wesley's peers heard of the great liberty of the children of God, as Wesley preached it, especially in terms of freedom from the power of sin, they balked and offered a number of qualifications to this teaching. One such qualification took the form that a Christian believer, one who is born of God, is not one who does not commit sin, but one who does not commit sin *habitually*. Wesley, however, took exception to the addition of the word "habitually," which he judged to be an evasion. And in his "Marks of the New Birth," he questions his detractors, no doubt with some measure of exasperation: "But some men will say, 'True; "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" *habitually*.' *Habitually!* Whence is that? I read it not. It is not written in the Book. God plainly saith, he 'doth not commit sin.' And thou addest, 'habitual ly!'"¹²⁸ Moreover, Wesley reasoned on this head along the following lines: "But if you would hence infer that *all Christians do, and must commit sin, as long as they live*, this consequence we utterly deny. It will never follow from those premises."¹²⁹

And several years later, in 1756, Wesley responded to his critics by exploring

the example of a drunkard who maintained that the state of his soul was well since he was not drunk *continually*. In a letter to William Dodd, Wesley states: I tell my neighbour here, "William, you are a child of the devil; for you *commit sin*: you was drunk yesterday." "No, sir," says the man, "I do not *live or continue in sin*" (which Mr. Dodd says is the true meaning of the text), "I am not drunk *continually*, but only now and then, once in a fortnight or a month." . . . Shall I tell him he is in the way to heaven or to hell? I think he is in the high road to destruction, and that if I tell him otherwise his blood will be upon my head.¹³⁰

By the exclusion of the word "habitually" or "continually" from this context, Wesley believed he was safeguarding one of the precious promises of the gospel, and its second great liberty, that so long as the children of God abide in the love of God and continue to believe, "so long as this ¹³¹ they will not commit sin. In other words, regenerating faith and willful sin are mutually exclusive in Wesley's thought: when the one appears the other recedes. In fact, Wesley details the slow and subtle process of the loss of faith and a descent into sin— what some might call a reversal of the *ordo salutis*—in his sermon, "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God."¹³² Nevertheless, his emphasis is elsewhere; not on human sin and weakness, but on the sufficiency of God's grace. The optimism of grace, therefore, not the pessimism of nature, is the major emphasis here. A God who is good enough to forgive sin is also powerful and loving enough to transform the sinner.

Does Wesley's doctrine of sin, then, mean that those who are born of God can never sin again? Moreover, does the evidence of willful sin subsequent to the new birth indicate that one was never truly born of God? To these questions Wesley replies:

It is plain, in fact, that those whom we cannot deny to have been truly "born of God" . . . nevertheless not only could but did commit sin, even gross, outward sin. They did transgress the plain, known laws of God, speaking or acting what they knew he had forbidden. . . . I answer, what has been long observed is this: so long as "he that is born of God keepeth himself " (which he is able to do by the grace of God) "the wicked one toucheth him not." But if he keepeth not himself, if he abide not in the faith, he may commit sin even as another man.¹³³

On a more recent note, a second qualification to Wesley's teaching that the new birth entails freedom from the power of sin emerges in the work of John Cobb.¹³⁴ This process theologian notes, for example, that in the sermon "The Repentance of Believers," Wesley contends that sin cleaves not only to our words but to our actions as well.¹³⁵ More important for the task at hand, Cobb

suggests that because sin cleaves in this fashion, regenerate believers remain under its power or dominion. This interpretation, which, by the way, is becoming increasingly popular in American Methodism, is implausible for a number of reasons: First of all, in his companion sermon "Sin in Believers," produced a few years earlier in 1763, not only does Wesley distinguish the guilt, power, and being of sin in his analysis in a way that Cobb and others do not, but he also indicates that a child of God is free from sin's power: "The *guilt* is one thing, the *power* another, and the *being* yet another," Wesley exclaims; "That believers are delivered from the *guilt* and *power* of sin we allow; that they are delivered from the being of it we deny."¹³⁶

Second, the references in Wesley's writings to freedom from the power of sin as a mark of the new birth are far too numerous to lend credence to Cobb's view. To cite just one example (and others are listed below), the elderly Wesley addresses this specific issue in some detail in his pungent work *A Blow at the Root: or Christ Stabbed in the House of His Friends*, produced in 1762. Ever careful in his choice of language, Wesley reasons along the following lines: "I testify unto you, that if you still continue in sin, Christ shall profit you nothing; that Christ is no Savior to you, unless he saves you *from* your sins."¹³⁷

A more plausible interpretation emerges in the observation that by sin cleaving to our words and actions, Wesley most probably meant that sin still *remains* in the heart, and it, therefore, has an unconscious (and therefore largely unintentional) effect on our words and actions. Consequently, when Wesley insists in his sermon "The Repentance of Believers" that sin still cleaves to our works of mercy and piety before the *being* of sin is removed, he is indicating perhaps that even our most noble works may, at least in part, be motivated by the carnal nature that yet *remains* in a child of God, that a self-interest of which we are only dimly aware may still inform both our words and actions. And it is precisely the lack of awareness (as we think we are simply doing good), the lack of conscious intent, that keeps this inbred sin that cleaves to our words and actions from being a *willful* violation of a known law of God and, therefore, from issuing in actual sin, properly speaking.¹³⁸

A third qualification comes in the form of argument that the sons and daughters of God are only delivered from committing outward, but not inward, sin. This claim also flies in the face of considerable evidence. For example, in 1738, in the *Rules of the Band Societies*, one of the questions that was posed to each person who desired membership in this special group was the following: "Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?"¹³⁹ Moreover, a few years

later in the Conference Minutes of 1744, it was affirmed by all present that "peace, joy, love, power over all outward sin, and power to keep down inward sin"¹⁴⁰ are the immediate fruits of justifying (and regenerating) faith. And in the sermon "The Marks of the New Birth," produced in 1748, Wesley states quite clearly that an immediate and constant fruit of this (regenerating) faith is "power over outward sin of every kind . . . and over inward sin."¹⁴¹

In addition, it is simply contradictory to maintain that, for Wesley, regeneration entails freedom only from the power of outward sin, such that "the believer" can succumb to—indeed be dominated by—inward sin and yet remain holy. The point is, and it bears repeating, inward sin does indeed remain in the hearts of the children of God, but it does not *reign*. A believer, Wesley declares, "may have *anger* in him, yea, and a strong propensity to furious anger, without *giving way* to it. . . . Here, therefore, as in ten thousand instances, there is *sin* without either *guilt* or *power*."¹⁴² Put another way, "a man may be in God's favor though he *feel* sin; but not if he *yields* to it. *Having sin* does not forfeit the favour of God; *giving way to sin* does."¹⁴³

So then, Wesley's views on sin and grace highlight not only the moment-by-moment dependence of the believer on God, but also the availability of divine life-sustaining grace. In this setting, the enabling presence of the Most High is expressed in a positive way: "he who walks by the Spirit," Cannon notes, "is led into all holiness of conversation."¹⁴⁴ Therefore, a Christian not only can, but also should, be free from the power of sin. Nevertheless, the Christian can fall through a loss of faith and sin like any other person. Wesley holds both these ideas together.

Did Wesley Maintain His Standard of the New Birth?

In the chapter on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we saw how failing to recognize that Wesley actually understood the "faith of a servant" in two key ways, not one, necessarily led to lowering the standards of what he, himself, had called the proper Christian faith or real Christianity. Thus the popular, though erroneous, assertion that the faith of a servant in each and every instance is necessarily saving faith falls hard on the evidence of Wesley's own writings. As we noted earlier, Wesley specifically identified the faith of a servant (in our "broad sense") with the spirit of bondage, and therefore with the ongoing dominion of sin, as late as 1788 in his sermon "On the Discoveries of Faith."¹⁴⁵ To deem *this* faith as justifying (or regenerating) faith, as if one could be or remain justified in the ongoing practice of sin, is therefore exceedingly problematic.

In a similar fashion, recent Methodist scholarship has suggested that the standard of liberty with respect to the new birth, in this case freedom from the power or dominion of sin, only characterizes the middle but not the later Wesley. Maddox, whose work is typical of this view, argues that the standard of teaching reflected in Wesley's two key sermons in 1748, namely, "The Marks of the New Birth," and "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God," was later modified, suggesting, as he puts it, "changes in his convictions."¹⁴⁶ But as the appeal to the "later" or even the reputed "whole" Wesley was problematic in terms of a proper understanding of the faith of a servant, so, too, is it equally troubling with respect to the standard of the liberty of the children of God as Wesley himself had understood it. Simply put, as the standards go, so go the promises. The two are inextricably connected.

Our approach in resolving, or at least illuminating, this contested issue—an issue, by the way, that is informed by different interpretive paradigms—will appeal not simply to the later Wesley to demonstrate discontinuity, but to the whole Wesley to reveal remarkable continuity and balance across the decades. To be sure, the evidence that Wesley did indeed maintain the *standard* of freedom from the power or dominion of sin with respect to the new birth throughout his career, and not simply during his early or middle years, is so considerable that we must organize it by decade and in a summary fashion as detailed below:

The 1750s

"I will give you rest—I alone (for none else can) will freely give you (what ye cannot purchase) rest from the **guilt** of sin by justification, and from the **power** of sin by sanctification."¹⁴⁷ (This is Wesley's broad use of the term "sanctification" to refer to the new birth.) [Wesley, *NT Notes* (Matthew 11:28)]

"As if he had said, the objection were just, if the Gospel promised justification to men continuing in sin. But it does not. Therefore if any who profess the Gospel do not live according to it, they are sinners, it is certain; but not justified, and so the Gospel is clear."¹⁴⁸ [Wesley, *NT Notes* (Galatians 2:18)]

The 1760s

"What; make Christ destroy his own kingdom? make Christ a factor for Satan? set Christ against holiness? talk of Christ as saving his people in their sins? It is no better than to say, He saves them from the **guilt**, and not from the **power**, of sin. Will you make the righteousness of Christ such a cover for the unrighteousness of man? . . . O come back to the true, the pure, the old gospel! that which ye received in the beginning."¹⁴⁹ [Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:368 ("A Blow at the Root: Or Christ Stabbed in the House of His Friends")]

"You are really changed; you are not only accounted, but actually 'made, righteous.' 'The law'—the inward **power**—'of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made' you 'free'—really, actually free—'from the law' or **power** 'of sin and death.' This is liberty, true gospel liberty, experienced by every believer."¹⁵⁰ [Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:367 ("A Blow at the Root: Or Christ Stabbed in the House of His Friends")]

"But believers walk after the Spirit, (Rom. viii. 1,) and the Spirit of God dwells in them; consequently, they are delivered from the **guilt**, the **power**, or, in one word, the **being** of sin. These are coupled together, as if they were the same thing. But they are not the same thing. The **guilt** is one thing, the **power** another, and the **being** yet another. That believers are delivered from the **guilt** and **power** of sin we allow; that they are delivered from the **being** of it we deny."¹⁵¹ [Deliverance from the "being" of sin awaits the work of entire sanctification. (Outler, *Sermons*, 5:152 ["On Sin in Believers"])]

"There is a general deliverance from the **guilt** and **power** of sin. This is the

thing which you want, and which you should be continually seeking for. You want to be **justified** freely from all things, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. It might be of use if you should read over the first volume of *Sermons*, seriously and with prayer."¹⁵² [Telford, *Letters*, 4:230 (To John Valton, January 31, 1764)]

The 1770s

"Mr. Fletcher shows (as does the *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*) that sanctification is plainly set forth in Scripture. But certainly before the **root** of sin is taken away believers may live above the **power** of it."¹⁵³ [Telford, *Letters*, 6:217 (To Hester Ann Roe, May 3, 1776)]

The 1780s

" 'And the Lord added those that were saved daily to the church.' First, *they were saved* from the **guilt** and **power** [emphasis mine] of sin; then *they* ¹⁵⁴ [Outler, *Sermons*, 2:454 ("The Mystery of Iniquity")] *were added* to the assembly of the faithful."

" 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath given to be the propitiation for thy sins, and thou shalt be saved;' first, from the **guilt** of sin [justification], having redemption through his blood; then from the **power** [regeneration], which shall have no more dominion over thee; and then from the **root** [entire sanctification] of it, into the whole image of God."¹⁵⁵ [Outler, *Sermons*, 4:26 ("What is Man?")]

The 1790s

"Only let it be remembered that the heart even of a believer is not wholly purified when he is justified. Sin is then overcome, but it is not rooted out; it is conquered, but not destroyed. Experience shows him, first, that the root[s] of sin, self-will, pride, and idolatry, remain still in his heart. But as long as he continues to watch and pray, none of them can prevail against him."¹⁵⁶ [Outler, *Sermons*, 4:157 ("The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart")]

To end well, one must begin well; to understand the *process* of sanctification aright, one must first reckon with its inception; and to comprehend entire sanctification as Wesley understood it, one must first grasp the gospel liberty of the new birth. For if freedom from the power or dominion of sin is not the salient condition of the children of God, then the repeated occurrence of sin in such a life, even if occurs only once a fortnight or once a month, will reveal that it is not actually deeper levels of sanctification that are being habituated over time, but the *cycle* of sin and repentance itself—a dynamic more typical of Romans 7 than Romans 8, more indicative of the pessimism of sin than the optimism of free and enabling grace.

Moreover, if the Holy One does not transform the very nature of the children of God when their sins are forgiven (and they are assured of the divine love and acceptance), then they would shortly be committing the very same sins for which they had just asked forgiveness in the first place.¹⁵⁷ Such a life would be marked not by liberty but by repeated failure and breaches of faith that would rob the conscience of what peace and comfort pertain to those who can cry, "Abba, Father." Again, in this view, with its ongoing sin, the "project" of the Christian life, so to speak, in this case, Roman Catholicism, in order to gain both balance and perspective.

would not be to actualize the perfection of the love of God and neighbor in daily life, but rather to realize the liberty, the freedom from the *power* or *dominion* of sin, that should already be in place for a child of God. "But even babes in Christ," Wesley notes in 1766, "are so far perfect as not to commit sin."¹⁵⁸

The New Birth as the Freedom to Love God and Neighbor

The utter giftedness of the new birth can be expressed in two key ways: The first, as we have just seen, entails *freedom from* the power of sin marked by the obedience of faith that earnestly keeps the commandments of God and thereby avoids willful sin. "You can love him and keep his commandments, . . ." Wesley observes, "Show then your love to Christ by keeping his commandments, by walking in all his ordinances blameless."¹⁵⁹ Indeed, for Wesley, the "sign or proof of the 'love of God', of our keeping the first and great commandment—[is] to keep the rest of his commandments."¹⁶⁰

But a second, more positive, expression of the new birth entails not simply *freedom from* the power of sin, but also *freedom to* love God and neighbor. And although some Methodist theologians insist on focusing almost exclusively on this second liberty of *freedom to* love; nevertheless, for Wesley, a strong connection exists between *freedom from* sin (keeping the commandments of God), on the one hand, and freedom to love God and neighbor, on the other hand, yet another variation on the theme of *holy* love. In a real sense, such freedoms represent two sides of the same coin, so to speak, a coin forged in the rich grace of God. To illustrate, for Wesley, the neighbor is not loved aright apart from holiness, separate from the initially sanctifying graces of the new birth mediated by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The sins of jealousy, hatred, and revenge, for example, will not exercise dominion so long as believers walk in saving faith and thereby remain free to love God and neighbor in a way that bespeaks of the graciousness of a new creation. Simply put, having died with Christ, believers can now rise with Christ. And the sacrament of baptism is emblematic of such dying and renewal, of both a "negative" work and a "positive" one in which holiness and love are joined.

Moreover, in light of all that God has accomplished in the life and death of Christ, the most serious sins, then, evidence the willful stubbornness not only to reject the love of God and neighbor, sometimes in some very subtle ways, but also to fail to return such love. Again, although there are many kinds of love, there can be no *holy* love of God and neighbor apart from the renewal of the new birth, separate from freedom from the power and dominion of sin. Consequently, in receiving the holy love of God, as exemplified in justification and the new

birth, the chains are broken, the shackles are cracked open, and the soul is set at liberty to love in a godly, empowered way. Wesley holds all of these elements together in the name of love.

So then as great as saving faith is, it is not the end or goal of religion. That honor in Wesley's practical theology is reserved for another. To illustrate, as a mark of a child of God, love is "the greatest of all,"¹⁶¹ Wesley exclaims. Saving faith ever points beyond itself to the love of God and neighbor. That is, faith is both instrumental to love and is ever active in love. Indeed, the expression "faith working by love" is one of Wesley's favorites and reveals that it is a lively, not a dead or nominal, faith that is associated with saving grace. Again, the inculcation of holy love in the heart, which begins at the new birth, properly speaking, marks an important point in the restoration of the image of God since the Holy Spirit, in an enabling and transforming presence, brings numerous gifts and graces. Indeed, the body and soul that were once handed over to the deceitfulness of sin have now become nothing less than the tabernacle of the living God, interpenetrated by a holy enabling presence.

But perhaps the best and most lucid expression of the glory of divine love resident in human hearts, and its effects, is found in Wesley's sermon "On Zeal," written in 1781, in which he declares:

In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne, which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne are all *holy tempers*: long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, fidelity, temperance—and if any other is comprised in "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy*, whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real *means of grace*, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed *works of piety*: reading and hearing the Word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord's Supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one — *the church*, dispersed all over the earth; a little emblem of which, of the church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.¹⁶²

In this sermon, then, it is as if Wesley has allowed us to peek into the throne room of his entire theological and moral enterprise.¹⁶³ And on the throne sits not doctrine or works of mercy, however noble or valuable they may be. No, love itself sits on the throne, and next to it are all those holy tempers (holiness)

described earlier. And it is precisely only when these elements are in place, as motivating factors, at the very heart of things, that Wesley is then willing to consider works of mercy, piety, and the like. "No outward works are acceptable to him [God] unless they spring from *holy tempers*,"¹⁶⁴ he cautions. And again, "That all those who are zealous of good works would put them in their proper place! Would not imagine they can supply the want of holy tempers, but take care that they may spring from them!"¹⁶⁵ Therefore all those "dispositions of mind" like meekness, gentleness, long-suffering and so on, the seeds of which are sown in the new birth, are not beside the point, a pious extravagance or indulgence, but are "absolutely necessary . . . for the enjoyment of present or future happiness."¹⁶⁶ To be sure, they are nothing less than the lodestars of the moral and spiritual life and the key to Wesley's practical theology.

Faith, then, as great as it is, is not seated on the throne, and in one sense it will pass away in the world to come. It will devolve into knowledge, for we will no longer see through a mirror dimly but then face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). Nevertheless, faith understood as humble trust will ever remain and will characterize the relationship between God and the obedient people of God throughout eternity. But love, the greatest mark of the new birth, so celebrated in Wesley's practical theology, will never and can never pass away.

The relation then between faith and love is essentially instrumental, the one ever points to the other. That is, faith is in order to love. It is the servant of love, the chosen instrument that not only receives the love of God in an array of holy tempers, but also works by love and is energetic and efficacious in service to both God and neighbor. Consequently, the holy love of God so richly displayed in Jesus Christ is not only the point of it all, the nature of true religion, but also the very substance of the Christian faith.

Today and Tomorrow: Conversion Revisited

In surveying today's literature on conversion, one is immediately confronted with a diversity of frameworks that are employed to study this intriguing and, at times, perplexing phenomenon. It's like "the proverbial elephant described from various 'blind' perspectives," Sara Savage writes, "a perplexing, hodgepodge of a creature."¹⁶⁷ Or as Kristin Menendez-Swenson points out, "there are as many definitions of 'religion' and 'conversion' as there are rumors about movie stars."¹⁶⁸ In light of this diversity, many scholars employ resources from a number of disciplines such as theology, anthropology, history, psychology, and sociology in order to offer an accurate picture.

The careful researcher, however, is yet able to distill a number of common elements or themes within an admittedly diverse body of writings. To illustrate, the temporal dimensions of conversion are not only salient, and therefore warrant attention, but also are well contested. Indeed, an axis emerges in the literature ranging from views that revolve around the instantaneousness of such momentous changes and those that argue conversion is best understood as a process, perhaps even a lifelong one. However, the "spatial" axis of conversion, interesting in its own right, may actually shed light on the numerous debates, sometimes heated, that surround the temporal dimensions. In his own research, for example, John Smith has contended that the terminology over the centuries has taken on the "spatial connotation of 'revolving,' 'reversing' and changing direction [that] was basic."¹⁶⁹ In other words, since changing direction is an oppositional phenomenon in that it necessarily entails no longer facing something precisely in order to face something else, then this spatial axis underscores the crucial, about-face nature of conversion in a way that is sometimes muted or outright denied in some temporal interpretations.

When a theological lens is employed, whereby the question of God is in the mix, this inclusion necessarily brings added depth and existential significance to such conversions since they involve not the penultimate (a change from being a fan of the Boston Red Sox to the New York Yankees, for instance), but an ultimate, worthy-of-our-highest-attention concern. This is a truth that Luther, Wesley, Kierkegaard, and Brunner understood remarkably well. That is, the reality of conversion is greatly affected by what agents are reckoned to be a part

of the transformative environment. For example, in his *Philosophical Fragments*, with Climacus as his mouthpiece, Kierkegaard focuses not so much on a change in *having* or even *doing* but on a change first of all in terms of *being*. This change affects everything else because it is radical, strikes at the root of a relational problem, and is brought about by no one less than God. E. Stanley Jones, the great Methodist evangelist, described the reality of theological conversion by considering a number of elements:

This conversion is "the birth of a new dominant affection." It is a change in belief, but it is more than that; it is a change in attitude, but it is still more; it is a change in direction, but more; at the basis it is a change in "affection." The conversion is a conversion of our love. We have been loving self, sex or the herd supremely—now we love God supremely.¹⁷⁰

In a similar fashion, the Roman Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan explored the dynamics of religious conversion as "being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love."¹⁷¹ Again, such a change marks "a total being-in-love as the efficacious ground of all self-transcendence."¹⁷² With God clearly in this environment as the principal agent of transformation, Lonergan rightly underscores the element of transcendence, of going beyond the resources of the solitary self, and of distinguishing natural changes from those that are not a human possibility at all but can only be effectuated by divine grace. Interestingly enough, Jones, in his own age, described this same self-transcendence in his pithy statement: "out of self, into Christ, into others."¹⁷³

Though theological conversion is often painted by its critics as "individualistic," it actually tends to be both far more personal and countercultural in its outworking than some have imagined. To illustrate, the call of Jesus to Nicodemus to be "born again," challenged this first-century Jew and required a confession of his own spiritual need despite his lofty status within the Jewish community.¹⁷⁴ Viewed another way, Jesus' proclamation that unless a person is born again he or she shall not enter the kingdom of God confronted the religious status quo of Israel at its very roots and called for both honesty, in terms of a painful recognition of need, as well as humility, with respect to being open to change. But all of this was hardly an invitation to individualism then as now. On the contrary, it was a call that entailed great *personal* depth and at times significant social dislocation. However, this last aspect of theological conversion has been lost in many culturally accommodated and nominally Christian countries in which the cost of becoming a Christian is about equivalent to changing political parties. In India, however, the price exacted today for

becoming a Christian is far closer to the challenge that confronted Nicodemus who, after all, visited Jesus *at night*. To be converted on the subcontinent, even now, often entails changes in social milieu, habits, customs, and manners, "in addition to forfeiting several legal rights, especially with regard to the inheritance of property."¹⁷⁵

The call to regeneration proclaimed by Jesus Christ, however, became less distinct in nineteenth-century America through the work of Horace Bushnell (in his *Christian Nurture*, for example) and later through the contributions of William James, the noted Harvard philosopher and psychologist. To illustrate, in setting up a distinction between "healthy souls" (who need to be born only once) and sick souls (who must be born again), James fed into some of the leading prejudices of the day, whether intended or not, among those of the "better," more established social classes who much preferred to be socialized into what religious sentiments they ought to acquire. The sick souls, however, because they were confronted with the "morbid" (actually all too human) powers of sorrow, pain, and death, had to be born again, lest they lose any chance at peace and happiness. James highlights the strain between these two populations, often at odds with each other, that emerges from their very different worldviews: "To this latter way, the morbid-minded way, as we might call it," he writes, "healthy-mindedness pure and simple seems unspeakably blind and shallow. To the healthy-minded way, on the other hand, the way of the sick soul seems unmanly and diseased."¹⁷⁶

James illustrates this key distinction even further by contrasting the healthy-minded soul with "the Methodist," in pointing to "the disdain of the Methodist convert for the mere sky-blue healthy-minded moralist; and you likewise enter into the aversion of the latter to what seems to him the diseased subjectivism of the Methodist."¹⁷⁷ As one who lived most of his life in the nineteenth century, James was perhaps thinking of Methodism's revivalist heritage in which calls to conversion were frequent and pointed. Much of this heritage, however, has been lost due to the changing social location of Methodism. That is, originally a reforming *movement* within the broader church, American Methodism eventually became the church itself, another mainline religious establishment that had difficulty, especially during the twentieth century, with issues surrounding identity and mission. For E. Stanley Jones, the acid test of the validity of a Christian church is "whether it can not only convert people from the outside to membership but also produce conversion within its own membership. When it cannot do both, it is on its way out."¹⁷⁸

But the problem here may not be so much with William James as with his subsequent interpreters, for even this Harvard professor recognized that "systematic healthy mindedness, failing as it does to accord to sorrow, pain, and death any positive and active attention whatever, is formally less complete than systems that try at least to include these elements in their scope."¹⁷⁹ In fact, James praised Christianity as a religion that is realistic and complete in that the pessimistic elements of life are not simply ignored, swept under the rug, so to speak, but are actually developed and integrated into a more inclusive whole.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, David Bebbington's engaging study of theological conversions from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century demonstrates that many of the negative elements that James had highlighted in his own work, such as death and illness, were actually some of the precipitating factors leading to change.¹⁸¹ Other research has demonstrated that the young were particularly susceptible to such influences, with the average age of conversion being 15.2 years,¹⁸² with very few occurring after the age of forty. If, however, one moves beyond the focus on theological conversions, then some sort of change does indeed occur in later life, what is perhaps best referred to as a midlife transition. As one author put it, "Most people need a rebirth in their forties on general principles."¹⁸³ At any rate, the major fault lines of current discussions on conversion as recorded by Savage are as follows:

- sudden conversion vs. gradual conversion
- adolescent conversion vs. midlife conversion
- conversion preceded by crisis vs. no crisis
- conversion as passive vs. conversion as active
- negative mental health outcomes vs. positive mental health outcomes
- conversion as socially constructed vs. spiritually inspired
- the individual self as goal vs. self-in-relationship as goal¹⁸⁴

Due to space limitations we obviously cannot explore each one of these tensions. Instead we will simply focus on the first and the third since they repeatedly surface, either in a negative or positive way, in Methodist literature. Because this topic is so well contested within the Wesleyan community, suggesting competing paradigms of interpretation, it may be helpful to view this issue through the lens of another tradition, in this case, Roman Catholicism, in order to gain both balance and perspective.

Arthur Canales's work "A Rebirth of Being 'Born Again'" is a valuable guide

in this area in that it grapples with the language and theological realities of an evangelical Protestant subculture as perceived by Roman Catholics who, steeped in church tradition, "become uneasy and uncomfortable"¹⁸⁵ when they encounter the phrase "being born again." His analysis may also prove to be helpful to Methodists, in particular, in that it may suggest that a paradigm shift has occurred within this community from a traditional Protestant understanding of conversion, going back to Wesley in his emphasis on instantaneous regeneration (and the new birth akin to the temporal elements entailed in natural birth) to a more Catholic understanding in which process, response, and incremental development over time are the major elements.

To be sure, as Canales points out, the Catholic understanding of conversion is a lifelong journey that "demands a daily response and a desire to *change one's life*."¹⁸⁶ In this view, regeneration is not a temporally distinct soteriological event (unless one considers the "regeneration" of infant baptism); instead it is a process by which the Holy Spirit renews the person over time.¹⁸⁷ Catholics like to speak about conversions as a series of events that result in spiritual development.¹⁸⁸ Accordingly, in the place of the crucial disruptions of the Protestant paradigm, whereby the power or dominion of sin is actually broken in the children of God as one of the salient marks of the new birth, Catholics are directed to the sacramental life of the church for disciplined living and for the inculcation of gracious virtue. Indeed, it is the ongoing, processive nature of the sacrament of penance (reconciliation), a sacrament that in its repetition holds forth before the faithful the presumption of ongoing sinning, a characteristic that suggests little of what is decisive or crucial has either taken place—or is expected to take place. Wesley's lifelong claim, then, from 1738 forward (remember Peter Böhler!) that a child of God is free from the power or dominion of sin can only be met with disbelief or be viewed as a state of grace reserved only for an elite few. Simply put, crucial realizations have been washed out in incremental process.

And yet Canales wants to appropriate the language of "being born again" that has been so helpful in the Protestant community because, in his ten years of youth ministry, the text of John 3:3 "has served [Canales] in more ministerial success than any other biblical text in terms of bringing high school students to a fuller and richer appreciation of their ¹⁸⁹ In his estimation, a positive pastoral strategy would therefore entail an emphasis on regeneration that would be marked by life in the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁰

Though this Catholic reappropriation of the language of being born again

does indeed resemble Protestant use, some important differences must be noted as well. First of all, the change involved in being born again in this context is not as decisive as in Protestant conceptions in that it entails an incremental change, one of degree, one that is caught up in a *series* of changes or conversions. Simply put, there is not *a* conversion, but many conversions. But would these many other conversions be equal to the qualitative difference that emerges in having the marks of the new birth instantiated in Christian life? Or is it that these subsequent conversions increasingly approach what graces should already be in place for *every* child of God, properly speaking?

Second, relegating what many Protestants mean by regeneration simply to the graces of infant baptism, Canales points out that "to speak of a 'born again' event for baptized Christians is un-scriptural because an authentic 'born-again' experience takes place in the life of the unbaptized."¹⁹¹ But such a claim fails to realize that even those who were truly born again in infant baptism (as Wesley himself seems to have assumed as well) may "wash away" this initial cleansing and therefore be in need of a significant and life-changing renewal—one that has lasting consequences, especially in terms of the freedom enjoyed. Wesley put it this way, "Say not then in your heart," he writes, "I *was once* baptized; therefore I *am now* a child of God. Alas, that consequence will by no means hold."¹⁹²

These preceding observations, however, are not to suggest that Protestant views are without their own difficulties. To be sure, this community of faith could profit from some of the many insights of their Roman Catholic neighbors. For during the nineteenth century in America, though Protestant revivalism was so successful on many levels, it nevertheless tended to diminish the importance of process leading up to (conditionally speaking, if there was time and opportunity) the real change of the new birth and thereafter. However, the proper response to this deficit is not to go to the other extreme, by throwing out the baby with the bathwater, so to speak, and simply emphasizing process or incremental changes to the detriment of the realization of qualitatively distinct graces. For while process, if it refers to the psychological diversity of conversion (it may be dramatic or not; it may be remembered or not), is indeed consonant with the instantiation of regenerating, saving grace, process can also be understood in a second more open-ended way in which regenerating grace ever remains a *possibility* that has never been actualized.

In light of these issues, one must hold together in an artful and well-developed tension a Catholic emphasis and a Protestant one, preparation for change (if time and opportunity permit) and decisive *actualizations* of grace

along the way that make a critical and lasting difference. Indeed, it is this very conjunction and balance that not only marked Wesley's theology in his own age, but also is one of the many reasons his thought remains so relevant for today. Our age may have grown weary of hearing that regenerating grace, with all its attendant marks, is efficacious at the *beginning* of the Christian journey, but this is a truth that Wesley and others repeatedly affirmed in the name of a vital Christian faith.

Chapter Seven

The Church and The Means of Grace: The Community of Holy Love

Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. [John Wesley]

—John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 6:272.

The realization of such animating and life-changing graces as justification and regeneration, the movement from possibility to actualization, presupposes a community of saints that not only bears the gospel story throughout history but also forms the primary context for the instantiation of holy love in the newly transformed. Indeed, since the justification and regeneration that characterize the proper Christian life for Wesley entail changes in relation and being, which issue in nothing less than the freedom of holy love toward both God and neighbor, then such changes must be understood in the context of the community of faith in which they arise. Whether it is fully recognized or not, every Christian believer is and must be related to the church; no believer comes to faith alone. Put another way, the very good news of the gospel that is believed and embraced is not the narrative of an individual but that of the church, the body of Christ, whereby a personal story is graciously caught up in the larger story of salvation history. In a real sense, for Wesley, the church is the ark of salvation, the chosen vessel, that enables the community to travel through the tempests and trials of life in order to land safely on the happy shore.

The Church

Though it has been recently claimed by no one less than a bishop that "one of the least well-defined areas of United Methodist doctrine is its ecclesiology,"¹ such a statement would not be an apt description of the thought of John Wesley. To be sure, the father of Methodism thought often of the nature of the church and its proper parameters as he considered his own ministry, his distinct call, of spreading scriptural holiness across the land. What is particularly fascinating about Wesley's views are the number of levels of his reflection since he realized that "a more ambiguous word than this, the 'church,' is scarce to be found in the English language."² Accordingly, at times, "the church" is taken to mean a building, a congregation, or a "body of people united together in the service of God."³ In many of his writings, Wesley prefers this last sense and such a body can be as small as two or three believers gathering together in the name of Christ or as large as a catholic conception that embraces "all the persons upon the face of the earth who answer the character here given."⁴ Again, the church encompasses "the whole body of true believers, whether on earth or in paradise,"⁵ the church militant as well as the church triumphant. But just what is this character that defines the universal or catholic church wherever believers are found? It is to be " 'one body', united by 'one spirit'; having 'one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all,' "⁶ a view that breaks out of all parochial conceptions in order to affirm the universality of the church that in its very essence as the redeemed community transcends a partisan and divisive spirit. The rallying cry is neither Paul nor Apollos, but Christ.

Though Wesley clearly affirmed the catholicity of the church, as an heir of the Anglican Reformation, he also maintained a "reformist" view as present in Article XIX of the historic *Thirty-nine Articles*, which states: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."⁷ Such a definition of the church, especially as employed during the Reformation, not only made allowance for and rendered intelligible the rise of the great national churches during the sixteenth century, the Church of England among them, but it also functioned as a standard to distinguish error from corrupting practice or teaching. Wesley affirmed such meanings as well, in giving his assent to this

article, but also made it clear that he would not, when pressed, defend the accuracy of this definition. In other words, Wesley's catholic sensibilities were so strong that he would not "exclude from the church catholic all those congregations in which any unscriptural doctrines . . . are sometimes, yea, frequently preached. Neither all those congregations in which the sacraments are not 'duly administered.'"⁸ More to the point, Wesley had in mind all those *real* Christians who were a part of the Roman Catholic Church whose sanctified life would be clearly evident except to those who were marked by various degrees of bigotry or party spirit. Given these judgments, Outler contended that Wesley felt free to interpret Article XIX "more comprehensively than its authors had ever intended."⁹

Part of the substance of Wesley's catholic and generous spirit was informed by his attention to the end or goal of religion in terms of the inculcation of holy love among members of the body of Christ who may be confused or at times even mistaken in some of their beliefs. For example, although Wesley clearly thought that William Law, his one-time mentor, was in error with respect to the doctrine of justification by faith, such a mistake did not prevent Law from actually being justified. Indeed, it seems somewhat odd that in all of the definitions of the church explored so far, not one places an appropriate emphasis on holiness as characterizing the body of Christ in a distinct way. To correct this deficiency, Wesley harkened back to the language of the Apostles' Creed in several of his writings in order to affirm the reality of "the *holy* catholic church." And he reveals the source of such holiness in the following observation: "The church is called holy because Christ the head of it is holy." . . . Nay, the shortest and the plainest reason that can be given, and the only true one, is: the church is called 'holy' because it is holy; because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as he that called them is holy.¹⁰

Elsewhere Wesley indicates that the apostle Paul defined the church specifically in terms of holiness or sanctification by addressing his First Letter to the Corinthians: "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus."¹¹ As such, those who are a part of the *ecclesia* who have been called out of the world and who are sanctified, at least initially so, are aptly called saints. Other elements that Wesley believed were integral to a proper understanding of the church are found in one of his more pungent and succinct definitions as he reflected on the meaning of Acts 5:10: "And here is a native specimen of a New Testament Church: called by the gospel, grafted into Christ by baptism, animated by love, united by all kind of fellowship, and disciplined by the death of Ananias and Sapphira."¹²

These various levels of Wesley's definition of the church can be expressed in terms of a larger tension or conjunction. On the one hand, Wesley considers the church an institution marked by the proper preaching of the word of God and where the sacraments are duly administered. This institutional or "objective" definition allows Wesley and the Methodist movement to be in conversation with the broader Catholic church for the purpose of reform. On the other hand, Wesley defined the church not simply in terms of institutions and objective elements, but also in terms of flesh and blood people, members of the body of Christ who as a peculiar people are holy precisely because their Savior is holy. As such, the church is a living organism, the body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, and called to that holiness that befits the saints. Outler characterized this dialectical tension embedded in Wesley's overall view as a "blend of Anglican and Anabaptist ecclesiologies."¹³ And Snyder, for his part, considered it in terms of "the Catholic tradition mediated through Anglicanism and the Believer's Church tradition mediated mainly through the Moravian Brethren."¹⁴

Yet another way of considering this conjunction is in terms of institutional and functional emphases, whereby the public church is from time to time called to reform in light of the task of raising up a holy people who are animated by the love of God and neighbor. For if the church is no longer aiming at the inculcation of holy love, as the point of it all in the lives of its members, if it fails to demonstrate the universality of such love by being deflected with parochial concerns, then in Wesley's judgment, it has lost its way no matter what institutional or objective elements remain in place. In such instances, reform, in line with a functional understanding of the church, becomes a *necessity*, a word that Wesley often employed to justify several of the initiatives of Methodism.

The Church in Decline

Wesley's ecclesiology, of course, must also be viewed against the larger backdrop of his preferred way of reading the history of the church, what scholars call "historiography." As will be apparent shortly, Wesley's interpretation of the story of the church is by and large a Protestant one in which periods of decline in the broader institutional church are met by a number of reforming movements. But such decline was not so late as the Middle Ages—as in some other views. Instead, for Wesley, though the church began in universality and innocence on the day of Pentecost, where even different languages and traditions did not divide, the "mystery of iniquity," as he puts it, soon began to have its effect on the early community of faith through the greed and lying of Ananias and Sapphira. Again, even before the end of the apostolic age, the mystery of iniquity began "to 'work' in the ministers as well as the people."¹⁵ "And if the state of the church in the very first century was so bad," Wesley observes, "we cannot suppose it was any better in the second."¹⁶ In short, the tempers or dispositions of the heart of these Christians were unfortunately "exactly the same with those of their heathen neighbors."¹⁷

Three major elements, according to Wesley, make up this narrative of decline. First of all, the universality of the gospel, the embrace of the neighbor in holy love who heretofore was deemed simply "the other," was quickly marred by partiality and an incipient tribalism whereby particular groups preferred their *own* members not only to the detriment of others but also to the neglect of the entire community. Again, partiality and division crept into the body of Christ in which "too much regard for those of our own side [arose], and too little for others, though equally worthy."¹⁸ Clearly Wesley understood the serious nature of partiality (preferring those who are like us to the detriment of others) in that such a prejudgment in his estimation always entailed subtle forms of idolatry in which some penultimate value (class, race, economic status, culture, language, or denomination) was made ultimate. In short, partiality strikes at the very heart of the gospel, at the very substance of a catholicity manifested in the universal love of God and neighbor.

Second, Wesley's historiography is similar, at least in some respects, to Anabaptist and Free Church models in that the figure of Constantine, Roman emperor from the fourth century, weighs heavily in his analysis. And though

Eusebius of Caesarea, the father of church history, looked favorably on Constantine, an emperor who in several ways favored the church, Wesley's view is far more complicated and is marked by considerable irony. "Constantine's calling himself a Christian, and pouring that flood of wealth and power on the Christian church, the clergy in particular," Wesley writes, "was productive of more evil to the church than all the ten persecutions put together."¹⁹ Put another way, the power, riches, and honor that Constantine heaped on the church led not to its flourishing, as some had expected, but to its diminishment by undermining its integrity, call, and very purpose. Add to this Wesley's observation that during the fourth century the church and the state "were so strangely and unnaturally blended together, [that] Christianity and heathenism were so thoroughly incorporated with each other,"²⁰ and we can begin to appreciate why Wesley preferred the ante-Nicene period of the church to all others, a judgment duplicated among many of his fellow Anglicans.

Moreover, in Wesley's reading, this decline brought about by Constantine was not reversed in any significant way until the sixteenth century when God raised up a number of prophetic witnesses to call the broader catholic church back to its first love. "Such has been the deplorable state of the Christian church from the time of Constantine till the Reformation,"²¹ Wesley observes. The mystery of iniquity in the form of "human inventions added to the word; mere outside performances put in the room of faith and love; [as well as] other mediators besides the man Christ Jesus,"²² all of these barnacles, so to speak, that had accrued on the ark of salvation over time, and in a context of wealth, power, and honor, began to be graciously stripped away during the sixteenth century and thereafter. Indeed, Wesley was so positive about the work of the Reformers, especially in terms of the elevation of moral life, that he pointed out on one occasion: "ever since the Reformation, and particularly in the present century, the behaviour of the clergy in general is greatly altered for the better."²³

Third, the riches that flow from the church being preferred by the state, the mixing of Christ and culture, a holy way and a worldly one, is one of the most significant factors leading to the demise of the church's witness. However, the external factor of being favored by the state in both honor and power must also be seen in terms of some of the internal elements of the Christian faith itself, which, if not checked by discipline and grace, can readily lead to decline. In fact, according to Wesley "wherever *true* Christianity spreads it must cause diligence and frugality, which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches!"²⁴ Therefore Wesley's pastoral counsel of gaining and saving all that one can, as

present in his sermon "The Use of Money," must be matched by giving all one can in order to prevent the specter of riches. " 'As money increases," he pointedly remarks, "so does the love of it' and always will, without a miracle of grace."²⁵

Though Wesley's definition of what it is to be rich has been hailed by some Methodists as remarkably helpful,²⁶ others are not so convinced. The claim that anyone who has more than the bare necessities of life, and a little left over, is rich puts forth a definition that is not a part of any reputable economic theory past or present. In a real sense, this is an "ecclesiastical" definition of wealth, preoccupied with a peculiar understanding of humility and pride, that emerged before the full weight of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, produced in 1776, was felt in Europe and elsewhere.²⁷ Arguing ostensibly from a larger theme of proper stewardship, Wesley posited a "zero sum" world in which the maxim, "if the poor have too little it must be because the rich have too much," by and large ruled the day. As such, not only did he fail to recognize how capital actually works in a growing economy, even in a mercantilist one, but also his concern for stewardship, of what he called "robbing the poor," often devolved upon such petty matters as the size and shape of women's bonnets (and he forgets that poor workers often made these accessories) or upon his favorite moral foibles of censure, the consumption of alcohol among them.²⁸

The stark, even trenchant, nature of Wesley's economic judgments is mitigated somewhat in his realization that proper stewardship does indeed entail "laying up treasures on earth" in order to take care of dependents when workers, either through illness or age, are no longer able to provide an income. And he noted in a similar fashion that people may have more than the necessities of life and yet not be rich simply because they are in debt.²⁹ Beyond this, Wesley was astute enough not to draw an exact equation between economic status and a soteriological one, as is so often done today, and he even noted on one occasion that "it is no more sinful to be rich than to be poor."³⁰ But he immediately added, lest there be misunderstanding, "It is dangerous beyond expression."³¹ That danger consisted, first of all, in the corruption of holy tempers, which make up the substance of real, vital religion. "Have they [riches] not hurt you already, have they not wounded you in the tenderest part, by slackening, if not utterly destroying your 'hunger and thirst after righteousness,' "³² and thereby undermining humility, meekness, patience, works of mercy, and piety?³³ Furthermore, riches corrupt the church itself not only because they are "a

hindrance . . . to the very first fruit of faith, namely the love of God" and "neighbor,"³⁴ but also because they are a temptation of "*atheism* . . . even to an entire forgetfulness of God, as if there was no such Being in the universe."³⁵

In short, even though Wesley perhaps set the standard for what constitutes riches far too low, such that those barely making ends meet were often identified as "rich," his larger concerns of proper stewardship, concern for the poor, and the realization that wealth can easily lead to idolatry and thereby corrupt the church were vital counsels then as now.

Methodism as a Reform of the Church

When Methodism arose at Oxford in 1729, as two young men saw that they could not be saved without holiness,³⁶ they had no intention of establishing a new church but of reforming an old one. "God then thrust them out," Wesley notes, "utterly against their will, to raise a holy people."³⁷ That this work or mission was a reforming movement within the larger church is evident in Wesley's assessment of Methodism in 1745 when he quipped: "When hath religion, I will not say since the Reformation, but since the time of Constantine the Great, made so large a progress in any nation, within so small a space?"³⁸ In other words, the nominal, formalistic Christianity that had been ushered in since the time of Constantine, with all its wealth, power, and privileges, was now being reversed, at least in some sense, by the "grain of mustard seed . . . sown near London."³⁹ Schooled at the Epworth rectory on the importance of the primitive fathers, especially the writers of the first three centuries, Wesley next esteemed the Church of England, despite its difficulties, as best of all, revealing once again his distinct Protestant historiography as well as the necessity of reform.⁴⁰

Even as a young man, John Wesley realized that great national churches, like the Church of England, though they insured the numerical predominance of a particular version of the faith, often left nominal Christianity in their wake. That is, the power of religion did not always follow its form. Indeed, for many in the eighteenth century, to be an English person was to be a Christian, so intermingled were the aspects of nation and faith. However, as early as 1725, the year in which Wesley clearly saw the end or goal of religion as holiness, he challenged such glib assumptions among his compatriots and entreated John Griffiths, for example, "to let me have the pleasure of making him a whole Christian, to which I knew he was at least half persuaded already."⁴¹ And a few years later, in 1734, in an important letter to his father, Samuel, the son complained that the bane of piety is "the company of good sort of men, lukewarm Christians (as they are called), persons that have a great concern for, but no sense of, religion."⁴²

John Wesley's preoccupation with the theme of real Christianity, historically speaking, was undoubtedly reminiscent of the work of Johann Arndt and of such early German Pietists as Spener and Francke. During his middle years, in a way

characteristic of continental Pietism, Wesley linked the motif of real Christianity to inward religion and reform, to those dispositions and tempers of the heart that mark the regenerate believer and constitute the proper Christian faith.⁴³ For example, in his sermon "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Sixth," Wesley underscores that Christ "has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity: the inward tempers contained in that holiness 'without which no man shall see the Lord.' "⁴⁴

During the latter part of his career, Wesley continued to highlight the distinction between nominal and real Christians and pointed out in his sermon "The New Creation," employing a familiar rhetoric by now, that the former "have the form of godliness without the power."⁴⁵ Clues, by the way, as to when Wesley himself determined in his own mind to be a real Christian are found in a late sermon, "In What Sense We are to Leave the World," in which he indicates again the significance of the year 1725: "When it pleased God to give *me* a settled resolution to be not a nominal but a *real* Christian (being about two and twenty years of age) my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself."⁴⁶ And when Wesley once again reflected back on the Oxford Methodists in a letter to Henry Brooke in 1786, he avowed that their design was nothing less than to be "Bible Christians."⁴⁷ And the following year, in his sermon "Of Former Times," Wesley revealed that the goal of the Holy Club was above all to help one another be "real Christians."⁴⁸ The goal of Methodism, in other words, "was not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."⁴⁹

Although eighteenth-century Anglicanism had its members who were either doctrinally confused (at times confounding justification and sanctification) or living far below the graces for which Christ died, nevertheless, it would be a mistake to paint the Church of England in the darkest colors possible in order to display the light of reforming Methodism. For one thing, many Anglican clergy such as Bishop Gibson were devoted, disciplined, and remarkably moral. For them, a "*gradual* improvement of grace and goodness . . . was a better route to spiritual enlightenment than the 'Madness and Enthusiasm' "⁵⁰ of the Methodists. In other words, the tensions of Wesley's reforming impulses as well as his distinct way of reading the history of the church are far more subtle than some have imagined. Such elements reveal that Methodism challenged, at least at some points, the very "catholic" form that the church had taken across the centuries beyond its most obvious corruptions. Thus, after reading "The General

Delusion of Christians with regard to Prophecy" in 1750, Wesley became fully convinced of what he had long suspected, namely, that "the Montanists in the second and third centuries were real, scriptural Christians"⁵¹ even though the old Catholic Church had condemned them. Wesley offers some clues to the dynamics and motivations of this condemnation in his following observation:

[T]hat the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were wellnigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.⁵²

In a similar fashion, Wesley remarks, "What the Donatists were, I do not know; but I suspect they were the *real Christians* of that age; and were therefore served by St. Augustine and his warm adherents, as the Methodists are now by their zealous adversaries."⁵³ That is, the relation between the Donatists and the ancient Catholic Church parallels, in some sense, that of eighteenth-century Methodism to the Church of England. And though Wesley elsewhere sided with many of the catholic theological judgments entailed in the Donatist controversy and did not doubt the legitimacy of a sacrament due to the moral or spiritual state of its celebrant, he was nevertheless astute enough to realize that this judgment, though necessary, had the unintended consequence not only of strengthening the claims of formalism and an *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments, but also of spawning some of the very elements (the sanctity of ministers in a sacramental context in one sense is irrelevant) that can easily lead to nominal Christianity. Simply put, reform is necessary not only when the church so obviously gets it wrong through corruption and abuse, but it may also be required when the church gets it right—due to the unintended consequences of appropriate and necessary judgments. This is a dynamic that Wesley clearly understood in his ongoing concern for the proper Christian faith. And when a great national communion such as the Church of England was reluctant to undergo the course of action prescribed by Wesley and the Methodists, she "handed the would-be physician his coat and hat, [though] he became the more eager to cure the patient in spite of herself."⁵⁴

The Significance of German Pietism and Moravianism

In this ongoing endeavor of reform of the mother church, Wesley and the Methodists were aided by the insights of two other reforming movements: Pietism and Moravianism. These communions of faith demonstrated both in thought and practice how an intentional and committed group of Christians could be within a church with a gracious and holy purpose without raising the specter of schism. And Wesley's ecclesiology is unintelligible apart from their contributions.

Major Events of Anthony Horneck's Life

- Studied Theology at Heidelberg
- Member of Queen's College, Oxford
- Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral (1670)
- Chaplain to William III
- Prebendary of Westminster (1693)

Anthony Horneck (1641– 1697), a German Reformed Pietist who was born in the Palatinate, planted the seeds of the religious society movement in England not long after he arrived in 1661. As a minister at Savoy and with discipline in mind, Horneck advocated the society concept, not in a divisive way, but as a means "of regulating and modeling the church's adherence to the primitive faith."⁵⁵ In his writings (*The Happy Ascetik*, *The Sirenes*, and *Delight and Judgment* among them), this earnest pastor held up the early church as a model for contemporaries to emulate, a primitivism that Wesley shared as well. Such an appeal garnered a hearing in some corners of the Church of England, especially among those who cherished the writings of the early church fathers, and the religious society movement was the result.⁵⁶ From this movement came "the Society for the Reformation of Manners (1691), the Society for Prompting Christian Knowledge, or SPCK (1698), and its sister organization, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), in 1701."⁵⁷ Samuel

Wesley Sr. was an advocate as well as a participant in the religious society movement, and he passed along such an interest to his son John, who became a corresponding member of the SPCK in August 1732 while he was at Oxford.⁵⁸

Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), an Alsace native, was the first among the Pietists associated with Halle to make use of *collegia*, small cell groups used to revitalize the Christian faith, even though neither conventicles nor the idea of *ecclesiola in ecclesia* was original to him.⁵⁹ In 1670, Spener established a *collegia pietatis* at Frankfurt am Main for the purpose of providing "the intimacy and discipline of community which [would] contribute to the health of the whole church."⁶⁰ And the design of these societies can be seen, in part, in a seminal and prophetic homily preached by Spener in 1669, in which he inquired:

O, what good it would effect if good friends would come together on Sundays, and instead of taking up glasses, cards, or dice would partake either of a book from which they could read something edifying for everyone or would repeat something they had heard in the sermon and each one would remember something that would help another therein, so that they might have some profit from it.⁶¹

The nature of Spener's *collegia pietatis* was largely conservative, and he was more interested in the reform of existing ecclesiastical structures and life than in their overthrow. Thus Spener was not a revolutionary or a radical like Labadie, and although he was troubled with certain aspects of a "national" church—such as its uncanny ability to promote nominal Christianity—he nevertheless gave it his tacit support by prohibiting the celebration of the sacraments in the *collegia* in a way that portended Wesley's refusal to allow his lay preachers to do likewise.⁶² But bear in mind that Spener substantiated the creation of such groups on the basis of the well-worn Lutheran claim of the priesthood of all believers. Wesley assumed a similar appeal, though he defended his employment of lay preachers, in particular, by an appeal to a distinction between ordinary and extraordinary messengers.

Opposition to the Frankfurt *collegia pietatis* emerged quickly. Like Wesley's societies more than half a century later, the *collegia* were seen as a threat to the institutional church in terms of both the increasing role given to laity and also their relative independence suggesting issues of power, prerogatives, and control. Spener, however, tried to address this last charge, and by 1675, he desired a change in the *collegium* from "a private matter created for Christian fellowship"⁶³ to "a churchly institution."⁶⁴ Like Wesley, Spener repudiated all notions of schism or separation from the mother church. In fact, as early as 1670,

he so feared the specter of division that he declared to his people: "as long as God permits it to abide, even a corrupted ministry is an honorable office from which one may not separate."⁶⁵

In a similar fashion, the influence of Moravianism on the communal life of Methodism can be seen most readily in the use of bands—groups that were not only smaller than a Methodist class meeting but also far more focused in their call for serious discipleship. Such a focus was evident in both the rules for the band societies as well as the pointed questions that were asked of its members on a regular basis. Henderson maintains that the bands were part of an "affective mode,"⁶⁶ in which transformation of the tempers of the heart, at some of its deepest levels, was ever the goal. Not surprising, some of the Methodists chafed under the required searing examination, and this structure of discipline eventually fell by the wayside in both British and American Methodism.

Impressed by the success of the Pietist *ecclesiola in ecclesia* model and the Moravian use of small, disciplined groups, Wesley developed the Methodist infrastructure in terms of its class meetings, bands, and select societies.⁶⁷ These cell groups became the practical expression of the priesthood of believers in that all members as well as the class leaders looked out for the spiritual welfare of one another. Discipline was exercised not only by such oversight, but also by restricting admittance to the love feasts, which always required a ticket. "The soul and the body make a man" Wesley quipped; "the spirit and discipline make a Christian."⁶⁸ In fact, he attributed some of the decline of eighteenth-century Anglicanism precisely to its lack of proper pastoral care and oversight: "In what part of England (to go no farther) is Christian discipline added to Christian doctrine? Now whatever doctrine is preached where there is not discipline, it cannot have its full effect upon the hearers."⁶⁹ Even more pointedly, Wesley added: "preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer."⁷⁰

The Methodist Infrastructure

Toward the end of 1739, eight or ten persons, who were deeply convinced of their sins, approached Wesley in London and desired that he would spend some time with them in prayer and advise them how they could "flee the wrath to come."⁷¹ This was the rise of the United Society, first in London, and then in several other places. "Such a society," Wesley observed, "is no other than 'a company of men having the form, and seeking the power of godliness.'"⁷²

Now in order to determine whether the members of the United Society were indeed working out their own salvation, the society was divided into smaller companies called **classes** that were composed of about twelve persons, one of whom was the leader. And although the only requirement for entrance into the United Society was a "desire to flee the wrath to come," as just noted, to *remain* in a class, aspirants had to evidence their desire for salvation by adhering to these general rules of the United Societies: (1) avoid evil, (2) do good, and (3) employ the means of grace. These same three rules, the first two of which form the basic precepts of natural law, emerged elsewhere in Wesley's writings, often in the context of repentance. This factor demonstrates that the very purpose of the class meeting was to foster repentance from an old way of life to a new one such that in time, sins would be forsaken and the gracious tempers of holy love would arise in the community and in the hearts of its members.

The genius of the Methodist system, then, was evident at its inception in being open to all people, not simply Anglicans, and yet applying to them a discipline that would most likely inculcate real, true, proper scriptural Christianity. In this way, open, willful sinners, those who refused to repent and to forsake their unholy ways, were not tolerated in the Methodist classes, lest the entire body be corrupted. "Evil men were detected and reproved," Wesley exclaimed; "they were borne with for a season. If they forsook their sins, we received them gladly; if they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared that they were not a part of us."⁷³ That such an exclusion was not done in a self-righteous way but with an eye on the good of the larger society is evident in Wesley's observation: "The rest mourned and prayed for them, and yet rejoiced, that, as far as in us lay, the scandal was rolled away from the society."⁷⁴ Unfortunately, these Pietist structures of discipline in the form of class meetings that had served eighteenth-century British Methodism so well are no longer

available in either a British or an American setting.⁷⁵

The Methodist class system was also distinct in that it was in sharp contrast to the Anglican form of Church structure, which "mirrored the class-conscious stratification of English society."⁷⁶ That is, "even the pew layout in the sanctuary [of an Anglican church]," Henderson notes, "was established according to an unchanging social order."⁷⁷ And though Wesley himself was not especially known for his democratic ways in the broader sphere of politics, he saw to it that such matters as class, economic status, or education did not lead to preference in the classes, thereby eliminating much prejudice at its root. Instead, one could advance in a Methodist class and assume a leadership role on the basis of faithfulness and spiritual progress, elements that were open to all. For this reason, among others, the poor often felt welcomed.

Though it was impossible to be a part of the United Societies and not be a member of a class, one did not have to participate in a **band**, a group that, with its more rigorous discipline, remained voluntary. Moreover, the bands were distinguished from the Methodist classes in that they had no designated leaders. Since it was assumed at this level of spiritual experience that participants had at least some measure of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, mutual accountability and care therefore provided what leadership and direction were deemed necessary. Nevertheless, Wesley himself did indeed offer some guidance in the form of the "Directions given to the Band Societies," composed in 1744. And although these Directions contain the same three elements of avoiding evil, doing good, and employing the means of grace that surfaced in the General Rules of the United Societies, and therefore suggest elements of repentance,⁷⁸ their content is somewhat different simply because they presume significant growth in grace. For example, the flagrant sins of "fighting," "drunkenness," and "taking the name of God in vain" of the General Rules are not even mentioned in the "Directions given to the Band Societies" since its members, to use Wesley's own words, "are supposed to have the faith that overcometh the world."⁷⁹ And although the classes and bands met separately, they were united at least once a quarter for the **love feast**, yet another Moravian contribution.⁸⁰

For those distinct members who "now outran the greater part of their brethren, continually walking in the light of God,"⁸¹ Wesley organized them into a **select society**. For one thing, Wesley desired a group of earnest and mature Christians to whom he "might unbosom [himself] on all occasions,"⁸² and one that he could also offer as an example to others as a pattern of love, holiness, and

good works. Because many of these members were on the threshold of Christian perfection and were an example to both the classes and bands, Wesley maintained that they need not be encumbered with many rules, nor did they have any stated leader. Instead, Wesley simply offered a few directions which included (a) confidentiality ("Let nothing spoken in this society be spoken again"⁸³), (b) obedience ("Every member agrees to submit to his Minister in all indifferent things"⁸⁴), and (c) contributions ("Every member will bring, once a week, all he can spare toward a common stock"⁸⁵). This highest level of the Methodist infrastructure, then, reveals that as grace increases so, too, does responsible liberty.

If classes, bands, and select societies constituted the entirety of the structure of Methodism in eighteenth century Britain, it would have been far less likely that the movement would have clashed as it did with the Anglican Church. But Wesley went beyond his Pietist and Moravian colleagues in his extensive use of **lay preachers**, often referred to as "**helpers**," as well as a number of "**assistants**" who aided in the superintending of these preachers. Wesley justified the employment of such preachers by making a distinction between an "ordinary" call and an "extraordinary" one, as noted earlier. In fact, in a letter to Mrs. Crosby in 1771, Wesley considered the "whole work of God termed Methodism [to be] an extraordinary dispensation of his providence."⁸⁶ The Church of England, however, did not see the matter quite this way, and several priests, and even a few bishops, repeatedly criticized the lay preachers for their lack of education and for their habit of violating parish boundaries. In 1744, Wesley organized these preachers into a **conference**,⁸⁷ and later on he took care with respect to what was preached in a Methodist pulpit by promulgating the **Deed of Declaration** that stipulated "persons preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's 'Notes upon the New Testament,' and four volumes of 'Sermons.'"⁸⁸

Drawing from both Pietist and Moravian models, what Methodism quickly became, to use the words of Outler, was "an evangelical order within *ecclesia Anglicana*."⁸⁹ In other words, Methodism was never intended to be a church, with the "full panoply of bell, book and candle,"⁹⁰ but a society, a *reforming order* within the larger communion of faith. "A society acknowledges the truths proclaimed by the universal church," Davies writes, "but claims to cultivate by means of sacrament and fellowship, the type of inward holiness . . . of which the church constantly needs to be reminded."⁹¹ As such, Methodism required an

environment of "catholicity" in which to function, an environment that was integral to its identity as Wesley had understood so well. Indeed, apart from its mission and rather functional understanding of the church, Methodism would likely lose its way, identity, and purpose. And this is one of the reasons Wesley was so strongly opposed to separation from the Church of England. "But whenever the Methodists leave the Church," he warned, "God will leave them";⁹² they will have the form of religion but lack the power thereof.

In tying the issue of separation from the mother church to the cause of keeping Methodism vital, infused by the Spirit of God, Wesley in some sense linked ecclesiology to soteriology. And whether Wesley faced the Anglican Church or that of Rome for that matter, he seemed to presume that the "catholic," traditional, and institutional church—though it prided itself on its correct doctrinal judgments throughout history and took comfort in its polity, church discipline, and means of grace—nevertheless needed an evangelical order within it in order to maintain the power of religion or what Wesley had so often called real, true, proper scriptural Christianity. Again, in Wesley's estimation, the broader church was constantly in need of reform and therefore ever required a transforming, prophetic order within it, lest the formal "objective" elements of the tradition, necessary to communicate the faith to subsequent generations, edge out a due consideration of the "enthusiastic," "supernatural," and "subjective" elements entailed in the healing presence of the Holy Spirit in all of the Spirit's decisive redemptive power. This is a dynamic, charismatic understanding of the church and one in which reform is ongoing. For as Methodism needed the Anglican Church as its context, so, too, did Anglicanism need the Methodist society for its witness.

The Practical Christian Life

The body of Christ as a living organism must be energetic, engaged in all manner of good works, in order to thrive and to be a blessing to others. The church must, therefore, be "outward bound." Some strains of Protestantism, however, even in Wesley's own age, drew the wrong conclusions from the teaching of *sola gratia* and argued for a passivity or quietism that should not be disturbed by works. To illustrate, some of Wesley's critics cried, "More people go to hell by praying, than by thieving,"⁹³ and others complained, "Away with your works! Have done with your works, or you cannot come to Christ."⁹⁴ Moreover, the confused and ill-digested theology of Molther and Bray at Fetter Lane led to Wesley's withdrawal from this society and marked his transition to the Foundery in 1740. And although the chief issue at Fetter Lane devolved upon works prior to justification, these judgments among quietist groups often influenced, to some degree, how other parts of the Christian journey were understood as well. For Wesley, however, the teaching of faith without works was simply the "grand pest of Christianity."⁹⁵

Much later, in 1770, the Methodist Conference reflected back on its very first assembly in 1744 and noted that even back then the Methodists had "leaned too much toward Calvinism"⁹⁶ in regard to the matter of "working for life."⁹⁷ That is, Wesley and his preachers declared that Jesus Christ had urged his disciples to labor, "literally [to] 'work, for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.' "⁹⁸ Thus, on the one hand, Wesley affirmed the sufficiency of God's grace, received as the sheer gift that it is. On the other hand, he explored that sufficiency, interestingly enough, also in terms of co-operating with and responding to God once the gift of grace was received. This balance of free and co-operant or responsible grace, the blending of Protestant and Catholic elements, encountered here as elsewhere, is the proper context to comprehend Wesley's counsels in his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," lest they be read in a flat, nearly semi-Pelagian way. That is, having *received* the gifts of justification and the new birth, which are not human works but divine ones, the community is now both enabled and empowered to *respond* to God's ongoing grace.

Since the prior free grace of God is the presupposition of responsible grace, and its proper context of interpretation, Wesley and the Methodists felt at liberty to emphasize the imperative mood of striving, straining, and laboring for life in

their many counsels with respect to serious Christian discipleship. "Whoever improves the grace he has already received," Wesley notes, "whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it."⁹⁹ This divine/human co-operation characterizes much of the Christian life and constitutes a genuine healing process, a real *therapeia psuches*, as the soul grows from one *degree* of grace and love to the other, and as the tempers of the heart are incrementally transformed in holy love. But again, if the prior and free grace of God is not seen as the appropriate context in which co-operant or responsible grace is understood, that is, if all grace is viewed simply under a broad synergistic paradigm (even if God "initiates"), then a serious misreading of Wesley's theology is likely to occur. Along these lines, a recent historian has described what he considers to be the Methodist emphasis in the following way:

What is distinctive about Methodist spirituality, however, is its remorseless emphasis on scriptural holiness and on the need for human beings *to take control of their spiritual destinies*, not as passive respondents to the iron will of God, but as active agents in "working out our own salvation," or what one scholar has aptly called "responsible grace."¹⁰⁰

Again, overemphasizing the synergistic, co-operant aspect of Wesley's theology, and not taking sufficient account of what Wesley had learned from Pietists, Moravians as well as his own Anglican heritage have led those outside the tradition to view Wesleyan Arminianism in a problematic way. To illustrate, Mark Noll, a Reformed evangelical, considers current Roman Catholic theology on the matter of salvation by grace through faith as a mediating position between Wesleyan Arminianism, on one end of the spectrum, and the theology of the Magisterial Reformers, on the other end! He states:

As earlier chapters have indicated, official Catholic teaching, especially articulated in the *Catechism* and "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," now seems to fall somewhere between John Wesley's Arminianism and the Augustinian positions maintained by Martin Luther and John Calvin.¹⁰¹

Far more able and accurate assessments of Wesley's sophisticated understanding of grace can be found in the work of Ole Borgen, a scholar who breaks out of an exclusive synergistic paradigm in order to observe: "They [justification and the new birth] are God's gifts and God's work, and man is not understood by Wesley to be actively cooperating in *these* aspects of God's saving work, although he does in others."¹⁰² Put another way, one must first receive the free gifts of God that lay the foundation for the proper Christian life before the

possibility of responding in *genuine* good works can even arise. Once again it is the holy love, instantiated at the new birth, that informs such works and gives them nothing less than the savor of heaven.

Wesley learned the proper balance of faith and works in the ongoing Christian life from both the early church fathers and from Reformed Pietism. As a child, he was brought up to reverence Scripture and "to esteem the primitive Fathers, the writers of the first three centuries."¹⁰³ At one point, Wesley had actually extended antiquity too far, "even to the middle or end of the fourth century,"¹⁰⁴ following in the path of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, who privileged the first four or five centuries of Christian witness in his own writings.¹⁰⁵ Wesley, however, corrected himself such that he could opine to Joseph Benson late in his career: "Who Mr. Tyndall is I know not; but he is just as sound a divine as Mr. Madan. I regard no authorities but those of the Ante-Nicene Fathers; nor any of them in opposition to Scripture."¹⁰⁶

Wesley's preference for ante-Nicene Christianity, to which he often added (Pseudo-) Macarius and Ephrem Syrus, not only was the source for his understanding of the proper balance of faith and works, but also was in line with his larger project of reforming the nation in general and the Church of England in particular. That is, Wesley esteemed the authors of this age precisely because they "describe *true, genuine* Christianity, and direct us to the strongest evidence of the Christian doctrine."¹⁰⁷ Again, Wesley reached back to antiquity, to Greek and Latin Fathers, for suitable models of the practical Christian faith in his own setting because "I see so few Christians now; because I read so little in the writings of later times, and hear so little of *genuine* Christianity."¹⁰⁸ Put another way, Wesley referred to Christian antiquity not to undermine the standards of the proper Christian faith, the marks of the new birth among them, but to actually affirm them by means of such an appeal. In fact, along these lines, Campbell has made an important distinction between a "conservative use" of the fathers and a "programmatic" one.¹⁰⁹ The former, on the one hand, was taken up by several Anglicans, Samuel Wesley among them, to demonstrate that the life of the ancient church had indeed been realized in the Church of England. The latter "programmatic" use, on the other hand, was employed by Wesley in his endeavor to reform the Anglican Church itself along the lines of real Christianity in which the proper balance of faith and works, justification and sanctification, process and actualization would be renewed and strengthened. Not surprising, then, as Campbell points out, "Wesley's vision of Christian antiquity itself diverged in

significant respects from the image of the ancient church handed down by Catholic and Anglican authors."^{[110](#)}

Beyond the early church fathers, Wesley learned that the practical Christian life of faith working by love entails a *process* of advancing from one degree of grace to the next, with crucial instantiations along the way, from the writings of Gerhard Tersteegen, German Pietist. Appreciating their emphasis on inward religion, Wesley translated some of the hymns of Tersteegen while he was in Georgia and thereby made them available for Methodist consumption. In these hymns, since they bore witness to "an inward appropriation of the *ordo salutis*,"^{[111](#)} Wesley encountered a theology that he found congenial to his own purposes. Unlike Zinzendorf, Tersteegen had not confounded justification with sanctification but saw the Christian life as entailing a "steady, daily growth in the praxis of saving grace,"^{[112](#)} whereby "righteousness was progressively imparted through the indwelling Spirit of God."^{[113](#)}

The Means of Grace

For Wesley the grace of God is often mediated to the soul through a variety of means, though the Word, in some form or another, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit as the administrator of all blessings, pervades every avenue of grace. Simply put, to use Wesley's own definition, the means of grace are "outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."¹¹⁴ So understood, grace is not amorphous, lacking form, but emerges in the context of words, signs and actions, and other media that communicate the substance of both divine favor and empowerment. Again, the notion of mediation (*universalia in re*) is paramount here and suggests some parallels with the sacramental theology of Thomas Aquinas, whereby "things" can communicate theophanic power, even the presence of God.

Following in some sense the typology suggested by Henry Knight, we must distinguish the *general* means of grace from the *particular*, and the latter includes the familiar instituted as well as the prudential means. In terms of the former, that is, the general means of grace, Wesley had in mind such things as universal obedience, keeping all the commandments, watching, denying ourselves at every opportunity, taking up our cross daily, and being increasingly aware of the presence of God.¹¹⁵ These means are general in that they are presupposed in every Christian life. In other words, they are the groundwork that informs Christian experience, with all its intentionality. As such these general means constitute what Wesley meant by the term "sincerity," which entails a number of ways that believers can be open, in an honest and humble way, to further growth in grace.

The Instituted Means of Grace

The first of the particular means, the *instituted*, are what most people think of by the phrase "the means of grace," and they are often referred to as "works of piety." They include such things as "*prayer*; private, family, public; consisting of deprecation, petition, intercession and thanksgiving"¹¹⁶; "*searching the Scriptures* by . . . reading . . . meditating . . . hearing"¹¹⁷; *receiving the Lord's Supper*, which is the constant duty of every believer; *fasting*, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays, which was the practice of the ancient church; and *attending Christian conference*, deemed a necessity because it is so very difficult to "order your conversation right"¹¹⁸ without the help of the community of faith. Moreover, this list reveals that the means of grace go beyond a mere mention of the sacraments to include the Word (prayer, searching the Scriptures, and Christian conference) in important ways. And this broader usage was originally found among Lutherans and was later reflected in the 1662 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*, most likely through the contribution of Bishop Edward Reynolds of Norwich.¹¹⁹

After enumerating these instituted means in his writings, Wesley was quick to point out that the "value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion; that consequently all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing, and vanity."¹²⁰ Put another way, the means of grace must be conducive to the larger theme of Wesley's entire theological enterprise, namely, the love of God and neighbor, a holy love that is the point of it all and the very substance of the Christian faith. These channels of grace, in other words, must ever point beyond themselves to something more vital. Again, if in various ways these outward means are separated from the Spirit of God, and become ends in themselves, then they "cannot profit at all, cannot conduce in any degree either to the knowledge or love of God."¹²¹ In a real sense, the means of grace "are only so many means of love," Wesley opines, "or the practice of those particular virtues which are the genuine fruits of love."¹²²

Moreover, this theme of underscoring the means of grace as *means* and not as the *end* of religion was so significant for Wesley that he also developed it in terms of the tension between having "the form" of religion but lacking "the power" thereof, and in terms of his well-worked motif of real Christianity. This particular explication of the theme, amply evident in Wesley's writings, was

deemed a prime species of fanaticism by several Anglican clergy (Bishop Lavington, for example), who by and large concluded in their own practical theologies that the means, in effect, had "intrinsic" power. That is, in their estimation, one could not employ the means of grace without *necessarily* advancing in the love of God and neighbor, as if spiritual progress was ever presupposed in the very use of the means.

Wesley challenged such glib assumptions that he believed moved in an *ex opere operato* direction in his observation: "Wherein we know by experience a man may labour *many years* [in doing no harm, or in doing good, or in using the ordinances of God], and at the end have no religion at all, [123](#) an observation that made his own pastoral counsel—for all its honesty—all the more intriguing. Indeed, not only did Wesley affirm, for example, that "whosoever therefore imagines there is any intrinsic *power* in any means whatsoever does greatly err,"[124](#) but he also maintained that "they fondly presume they are Christians already, because they do thus and thus, although Christ was never yet revealed in their hearts."[125](#) Again, for those who had hoped to be saved by what they had done, or how they had co-operated "by doing no harm, and paying every man his own, and saying your prayers, and going to church and sacrament," Wesley cautioned: "Now you have thrown off the mask: This is Popery barefaced."[126](#) And in an expression that surely bespeaks of Wesley's reforming seriousness on this score, he observed: "'Nay, but I constantly attend all the ordinances of God: I keep to my church and sacrament.' It is well that you do. But all this will not keep you from hell, except you be born again."[127](#) In light of these several counsels, Wesley also thought it well to keep in mind the nature of free grace in the form that, to use his own words, "God is above all means. Have a care therefore of limiting the Almighty. He doth whatsoever and whensoever it pleaseth him."[128](#)

So then if it was dangerous to undervalue the means, as had occurred at Fetter Lane, it was equally dangerous to overvalue them such that they became a substitute for vital religion. Wesley's balanced view, then, with its numerous tensions and themes, avoids both the shoals of fanaticism, on the one hand, and formalism, on the other.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Wesley's basic definition of a sacrament, drawn from the Church of England catechism, takes up the Augustinian distinction of *signum* and *res*¹²⁹ and is very similar to how he had already defined the means of grace. So conceived, a sacrament in its best sense is "an outward sign of inward *grace*, and a *means* whereby we receive the same."¹³⁰ In the Methodist Articles, produced in 1784, Wesley also notes that the sacraments, ordained of Christ, "are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us . . . but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him."¹³¹ Thus, the display of divine beneficence or good will, similar to Luther's emphasis on the *promise* of God, is ever a part of a sacrament as well.

In terms of an explication of the Lord's Supper in particular, Wesley was dependent, in part, on Daniel Brevint's *On the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, a work that in edited form served as the preface to *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, published by John and his brother Charles in 1745. Though Brevint was of the High Church school that was forced into exile during the interregnum of Cromwell, the first heading of his liturgical classic was entitled: "Concerning the Sacrament, as It Is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ."¹³² Lest Wesley's view be read in a Zwinglian way, Lawson cautions that the Lord's Supper conceived as a memorial must be carefully understood. "The scriptural term 'memorial,' " he points out, "has a much richer meaning than that of a memento of the past. It stands for the means by which the effect of God's historic redeeming act in the past is kept alive in present experience."¹³³ This connection between the past sacrifice of Calvary and its present reception in the Eucharistic community to which Lawson refers is evident in Wesley's observation "that the design of this sacrament is the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ."¹³⁴ Again, as Wesley comments on 1 Corinthians 11:20, an important passage on this topic, he refers to the Lord's Supper as "the solemn memorial of his death."¹³⁵ Simply put, it is a remembrance that entails presence. Or as Staples puts it, "the Real Presence is a spiritual and not a bodily presence."¹³⁶

Beyond this, the sacrificial love displayed at Calvary becomes a part of the present community of faith in its celebration, in its overflowing *thanksgiving* for

such a precious gift received. Accordingly, the Methodist Articles of Religion state, "The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but [also] is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death."¹³⁷ Put another way, the love of God, so resplendent at Calvary, has consequence in the present salvific graces of justification and sanctification received by means of this sacrament. To illustrate, in his sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion," penned in 1787, Wesley relates that "the grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins, by enabling us to leave them."¹³⁸ Again, in the Lord's Supper we receive not only "infinite mercy," but also several blessings that "we may obtain holiness on earth."¹³⁹ The Lord's Supper, then, that emblem of the gospel, was instituted by Christ to be the means of conveying not only prevenient grace, but also justifying or sanctifying grace as well.¹⁴⁰

The Lord's Supper, then, brings the meanings of Christ's death into the present community of faith, in a very tangible, sensible, and mediated way, where bread and wine become the conduits for saving graces. And though Wesley understood the Supper in terms of sacrifice, at least in some senses, he was careful not to construct a priestly sacerdotal role or to detract in any way from the *one*, complete sacrifice at Calvary. Article XX of the Methodist Articles of Religion, which follows the Anglican composition, reads as follows: The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.¹⁴¹

For Wesley, then, "the direction," so to speak, entailed in the medieval conception of a priest in this sacrament is in some sense called into question. Indeed, his emphasis is not so much on the role of a priest who, on behalf of humanity, offers the Father the sacrifice of Christ repeatedly. Rather Wesley seems to underscore the point that it is the Father himself who offers the gift of his Son that is remembered and presently received by means of the Holy Spirit in the celebrating community in which trinitarian themes are unmistakable. Two stanzas from John and Charles's hymns convey the meaning:

Draw near, ye blood-sprinkled race,
And take what God vouchsafes to give;
The outward sign of inward grace,

Ordained by Christ himself, receive:
The sign transmits the signified,
The grace is by the means applied.¹⁴²

Come, thou Witness of his dying;
Come, Remembrancer divine!
Let us feel thy power, applying
Christ to every soul,—and mine!¹⁴³

Beyond questioning the notion that the priest is a mediator between God and humanity, Wesley also took issue with the Roman Catholic idea of transubstantiation in terms of the elements of bread and wine. In fact, when Wesley commented on John 6, a key passage on this score, he considered the referent of Christ's flesh and blood to be not the bread and wine of the Eucharist but his passion on the cross; in other words, penultimate things must not be mistaken for the ultimate, nor symbols confused with the realities to which they refer. For though Wesley, like the early church fathers, affirmed a "Real Presence" in the context of the Lord's Supper, he rejected the view of a localization of that presence in the elements of bread and wine. That is, the body and blood of Christ are given in the Supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner.¹⁴⁴ In a way similar to Calvin, the power, strength, and efficacy of the sacrament are mediated by the Holy Spirit. However, unlike Calvin, Wesley maintained that it is not so much that believers are lifted up by the Spirit to feed on the body of Christ that is in heaven; rather it is, as Runyon points out, that "the Spirit brings Christ to us, expressing the grace and love of God toward us through the means of bread and wine."¹⁴⁵ This view, whereby Christ is *received* by means of the Holy Spirit, is known as "receptionism," and this teaching harkens back to the Anglican Reformation, a time when it was taught and developed by Richard Hooker.¹⁴⁶

Because the Lord's Supper is a means of grace and a comfort that communicates nothing less than the presence of Christ by means of the Spirit, it is imperative that those who "do truly and earnestly repent of your sins"¹⁴⁷ partake of this sacrament constantly. In a real sense, the Lord's Supper is food for the journey, strength for the tasks and challenges that lie ahead. Indeed, in his sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion," Wesley developed two key themes that point to this constant obligation. First of all, this is a command of Christ who specifically declared: "Do this in remembrance of me."¹⁴⁸ And second, the

Supper represents a mercy from God to humanity, for it is the gracious means through which "we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth and everlasting glory in heaven."^{[149](#)} Wesley's own practice entailed communicating at least weekly, often in a pattern of once every five days.

The Sacrament of Baptism

Though Wesley did not list baptism as a part of the ongoing instituted means of grace (probably because it is received only once), he nevertheless considered it to be one of the two sacraments instituted by Christ and one that is an important window on the nature of the practical Christian life. This sacrament, therefore, warrants inclusion at this point.

In his journal on 24 May 1738, Wesley wrote: "I believe, till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that 'washing of the Holy Ghost' which was given me in baptism."¹⁵⁰ Now if the phrase "washing of the Holy Ghost" is associated with the graces of regeneration, a likely inference, then it reveals that even after his evangelical conversion, Wesley still retained a sacramental view of the new birth strongly associated with baptism. But elsewhere he specifically wrote that baptism is not the new birth.¹⁵¹ How, then, are these two apparently contradictory statements to be reconciled, if at all?

It should, first of all, be observed that Wesley considered baptism and the new birth to be quite different from each other. These works are, therefore, to be neither equated nor viewed as interchangeable. That is, the sacrament of baptism, on the one hand, is a sign, an *external* work, and the new birth, on the other hand, is the thing signified, an *internal* work. "Baptism, the sign, is spoken of as distinct from regeneration," Wesley writes, ". . . [and] nothing therefore is plainer than that, according to the Church of England, baptism is not the new birth."¹⁵² Therefore, to confuse these two works, to speak of baptism as an inward work or the new birth as an outward work was clearly rejected by Wesley.

Second, though Wesley for the sake of clarity distinguished baptism from regeneration, he nevertheless strongly associated the two. Thus, the new birth is often associated with the baptism of adults, but this association is strongest, if not exact, in terms of infant baptism. Wesley, being the good Anglican that he was, apparently never repudiated the teaching of his church, which moved along these lines. And so when he asserted that the new birth does not always *accompany* baptism, he immediately added: "I do not now speak with regard to infants: it is certain, our Church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again."¹⁵³ In other words, though infant baptism is not to be equated with the new birth, it is always, apparently,

associated with it. And this is precisely the area in which Wesley's "sacramental" view of regeneration is strongest.

Nevertheless, Wesley's relatively high estimation of infant baptism needs to be interpreted not only against the backdrop of his sacramental views, but also in terms of his own larger soteriological themes; and when this is done, an even more complicated picture begins to emerge. First of all, it is Wesley himself who first raised the crucial issue of the lack of *repentance* and *faith* in infant baptism and in a way that indicates, perhaps, some hesitancy in this area. For instance, in his treatise *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, written in 1745, Wesley writes:

Infants indeed our Church supposes to be justified in baptism, although they cannot then either *believe* or *repent*. But she expressly requires both *repentance* and *faith* in those who come to be baptized when they are of riper years.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, it should also be borne in mind that even though Wesley upheld the appropriateness and value of infant baptism, its soteriological significance was diminished somewhat by his understanding of prevenient grace. In other words, because of the atonement effectuated by Jesus Christ, God the Father removes the penalty of original sin, which is eternal death, from all humanity both Christian and non-Christian, both infant and adult alike. No one, then, is punished eternally simply on account of Adam's sin as we have noted earlier. In a letter to John Mason in 1776 Wesley reasons: "Therefore no infant ever was or ever will be 'sent to hell for the guilt of Adam's sin,' seeing it is canceled by the righteousness of Christ as soon as they are sent into the world."¹⁵⁵

But what of adult baptism? Does the thing signified, the new birth, always *accompany* the sign of baptism in each instance? In his sermon, "The New Birth," Wesley reasons: "A man may possibly be 'born of water', and yet not be 'born of the Spirit'. There may sometimes be the outward sign where there is not the inward grace."¹⁵⁶ Interestingly enough, in his *Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*, produced in 1746, Wesley associates baptism not with being a present son or daughter of God, but with the nominal Christianity so typical of large national churches like his own. He writes: "It must be . . . allowed that the people of England, generally speaking, have been *christened* or baptized. But neither can we infer: these were once *baptized*, therefore they *are Christians* now."¹⁵⁷

Beyond this, Wesley indicates in his writings that he was very familiar with numerous instances of those who had been baptized in either infancy or in their later years who yet had none of the marks of the new birth and were instead

steeped in sin: "How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners,"¹⁵⁸ he asked. "What think you? Are these now the children of ¹⁵⁹ Such questions, of course, indicate that Wesley simply refused to comfort these open, flagrant sinners with the notion that they were still the sons and daughters of God, heirs of the kingdom of heaven, because they had been baptized in their youth. "Say not then in your heart," Wesley writes, "I *was once* baptized; therefore I *am now* a child of God. Alas, that consequence will by no means hold."God?"¹⁶⁰ And again, "Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye *were* born again in baptism."¹⁶¹ Indeed, to the mistaken claim that there is no new birth beyond baptism, a claim inimical in so many ways, Wesley energetically responds in his *Farther Appeal*:

I tell a sinner, "You must be born again," "No," say you, "He was born again in baptism. Therefore he cannot be born again now." Alas! What trifling is this? What if he was *then* a child of God? He is *now* manifestly a "child of the devil!" For the works of his father *he* doth. Therefore do not play upon words. He must go through an entire change of heart.¹⁶²

Therefore, to counsel these sinners that there is no new birth but in baptism, that they can no longer be renewed and cleansed after they have succumbed to sin, is cruel counsel indeed; it is, says Wesley, "to seal [them] all under damnation, to consign [them] to hell, without any help, without any hope."¹⁶³

So then, Wesley's "sacramental" view of regeneration emerged in his association of the new birth with infant baptism, a legacy mediated to him through his own Anglican Church by way of Roman Catholicism. His "evangelical" view, which is reformist in many respects, arose in his differentiation of the new birth from baptism, his failure always to associate these two elements in terms of adults, and his insistence that those who are born of God must evidence the marks of the new birth, namely, faith, hope, and love. Remark ably, it was Wesley's evangelical emphasis that blossomed as the great eighteenth-century revival progressed, and this emphasis is perhaps most evident in a mid-career sermon in which he stresses that the thing signified in baptism should be "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."¹⁶⁴ Few can doubt, then, that real, actual transformation at its most personal level was one of Wesley's constant themes and interests.

Prudential Means of Grace

Beyond the instituted means of grace, Wesley affirmed the value of prudential means, that is, particular rules posited by reason and experience in light of the guidance of the Holy Spirit with the goal of growing in grace.¹⁶⁵ In his *Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, Wesley also considered that such prudential helps emerge in the deliberative process of moving from the general norms of Scripture to particular circumstances and applications.¹⁶⁶ He most likely learned the value of such "arts of holy living"¹⁶⁷ from his mother, Susanna, who, in a letter on June 8, 1725, counseled her son as follows:

Take this rule. Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.¹⁶⁸

The careful advice of Susanna reveals that prudential rules are in some sense tailored to individual consciences and circumstances, with the result that general rules for others cannot necessarily be constructed out of one's real and very helpful convictions. And even in terms of individual believers themselves, these prudential rules may change from time to time due to significant growth in grace. Therefore, "with regard to these little prudential helps," Wesley observes, "we are continually changing one thing after another, it is not a weakness or fault, as you imagine, but a peculiar advantage."¹⁶⁹

Moreover, the partial reinscription of the moral law brought about through prevenient grace as a universal benefit of the atonement is a different process than drawing up prudential norms on the basis of Scripture, reason, and experience. That is, the former is basically an intuitive appreciation of the moral law, whereas the latter employs acute deliberation as one of the principal vehicles for its knowledge. Moreover, whereas the moral law is of divine origin, with strong christological associations, this is not necessarily the case concerning prudential means. Concerning the latter, Wesley wrote, "By this means we declare them all to be merely prudential, not essential, not of divine institution."¹⁷⁰

Works of Mercy

In addition to works of piety, as contained in the instituted means of grace, and the prudential rules that are conducive to flourishing in holiness, Wesley repeatedly affirmed the value of works of mercy as a genuine means of grace, whereby not only are the poor helped to a better life, but also those who minister to them benefit in so many ways. Simply put, works of mercy, whether to the bodies or souls of those in need, include such things as "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavoring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner."¹⁷¹

Interestingly enough, in a comparison of the value of works of piety and works of mercy, Wesley actually prefers the latter: "But they should be more zealous for 'works of mercy' than even for works of piety."¹⁷² Beyond this comparison Wesley reveals his ever-present goal in Christian discipleship in the following pointed observation: "Yet ought they to be more zealous still for *holy tempers*—lowliness, meekness, resignation; but most zealous of all for that which is the sum and the perfection of religion—the *love of God and man*."¹⁷³ Put another way, by means of works of mercy believers not only "exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real means of grace,"¹⁷⁴ but they also grow in the love of God and neighbor. Works of mercy, then, in a way similar to works of piety are genuine channels of God's grace not only to those who are served, but also to those who minister to them. This soteriological circle of ministry suggests a dynamic relation of care, whereby changes in the tempers of the heart, the implanting and fostering of holy love, may be the consequence of such simple helps and quite ordinary activities. The kingdom of God, then, often emerges in the context of the mundane and among the very least of all.

To serve the needy among the Methodists, Wesley used the structure of the class meetings, laced throughout the realm, as appropriate vehicles to distribute such goods as food, clothing, and fuel. Especially concerned about the lack of sound medical treatment in the British Isles at the time, Wesley took it upon himself to attend medical lectures, to secure the advice of a pharmacist and physician, and to offer simple medical treatments to the indigent.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, in order to meet the pressing needs of those who were nearly penniless, Wesley

created a free medical dispensary, the first of its kind in London,¹⁷⁶ and gathered together what medical knowledge he was able in the odd, though well-intentioned, manual *Primitive Physic*.

Beyond these ministries, which were motivated by nothing less than Christian love and compassion, Wesley employed women who were nearly destitute in the processing of cotton at the Foundery, and he also established a lending stock, for those short on funds, as early as 1746. In the beginning, this loan fund had hardly amounted to more than thirty pounds, but it soon grew to such an extent that about "two hundred and fifty persons were relieved in one year."¹⁷⁷ Among other things, Wesley's charitable practices included collecting (or "begging") money from some of his "rich" friends and then lending it to the underprivileged in lots of twenty shillings—a sum that was then repaid within three months on a weekly basis.¹⁷⁸ Considering these rules of repayment, together with the structure of the Methodist class meetings, through which much of this aid was distributed, one can easily discern the accountable and responsible nature of much of Wesley's ministerial practice.

In the area of politics, in which works of mercy were also undertaken, Wesley was somewhat more hesitant, and he remarked late in his career, "I am no politician; politics lie quite out of my province."¹⁷⁹ For one thing, Wesley thought that the political speech of the day was often not worth very much, if judged by careful reasoning, for "every cobbler, tinker, porter, and hackney-coachmen"¹⁸⁰ had a whole variety of political opinions that they often expressed freely to all within earshot. But did they have political knowledge? was a question that, if posed, could cut to the heart of the matter. Demonstrating a measure of humility, Wesley for his part admitted that he was not so learned as many of these malcontents; for "while they are sure of everything, I am in a manner sure of nothing."¹⁸¹ And he cautioned his own preachers against "preaching politics" in the pulpit unless, of course, it entailed refuting the vile aspersions cast against the king. "Our main and constant business," Wesley warned his preachers, "[is] to 'preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'"¹⁸²

Despite Wesley's misgivings in this area, he did after all express several political judgments in a number of treatises directed toward the government in the British Isles and in America as well. Preferring the constitutional monarchy established in England in 1688, when William of Orange and his wife, Mary Stuart, were invited to the throne, Wesley was critical of the political thought of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, especially when it suggested that the

people were the origin of power. For Wesley, God was and must be seen as the origin of power, and he, therefore, lampooned the reasoning of those political tracts that argued otherwise. For though some "democratic" pamphlets claimed that the people were the source of power, Wesley thought this claim was either an exercise in muddled thinking or outright hypocrisy since women, young adults, and those who did not hold a sufficient amount of land were outright excluded from political power—in other words more than half the populace. Beyond this, Wesley bolstered his critique of this political reasoning by an appeal to natural law, which in his estimation was a reflection not only of the moral law, the fitness of relations established at creation, but also of the *imago Dei* in which humanity was created. Consequently, "if it be said, 'O, women and striplings have not wisdom enough to choose their own Governors'" Wesley writes, "I answer, Whether they have or no, both the one and the other have all the rights which are 'inseparable from human nature.'" ¹⁸³

Wesley's appeals to natural law in order to undertake works of mercy on behalf of his neighbor were far more detailed as he argued against the vile practice of slavery. Those who profited from this social institution justified their actions by noting that the positive laws of the nation were on their side. In other words, their actions, despite much criticism, were in fact *legal*. Wesley judged such reasoning to be faulty since it never considered whether enslaving another human being was *moral* or not. In his "Thoughts Upon Slavery," produced in 1774, Wesley replies: "But can law, human law, change the nature of things? Can it turn darkness into light, or evil into good? By no means. Notwithstanding ten thousand laws, right is right, and wrong is wrong still." ¹⁸⁴

Yet another way that Wesley approached the whole matter of slavery and natural law was to champion both civil liberty that entailed the freedom to "dispose of our lives, persons, and fortunes, according to our own choice, and the laws of our country" ¹⁸⁵ and religious liberty that included the freedom "to choose our own religion; to worship God according to our own conscience." ¹⁸⁶ What grounded liberty in each instance for Wesley, and what could overturn slavery, was once again natural law, that is, rendering to all human beings what pertains to them *as human beings*. "Liberty is the right of every human *creature*, as soon as he breathes the vital air," Wesley notes; "and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature." ¹⁸⁷ In this context, then, the law of nature is a reflection of the moral law that expresses the "nature and fitness of things" established at creation. ¹⁸⁸ Therefore, slavery is not only a sin against humanity but also one against God, the Creator.

To undertake works of mercy on behalf of his neighbors who, though in chains, were "purpled over with the blood of Christ,"¹⁸⁹ Wesley, shortly before his death, wrote to William Wilberforce, who was a member of Parliament at the time, and urged him to continue his reforming, abolitionist efforts: "O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."¹⁹⁰ A few years earlier, Wesley had corresponded with Granville Sharp, who had founded a society for the abolition of slavery in 1787, and noted that "ever since I heard of it . . . I felt a perfect detestation of the horrid Slave Trade, but more particularly since I had the pleasure of reading what you have published upon the subject."¹⁹¹ Beyond this, a month later in November 1787, Wesley revealed similar sentiments to Thomas Funnell: "Whatever assistance I can give those generous men who join to oppose that execrable trade I certainly shall give. I have printed a large edition of the *Thoughts on Slavery*."¹⁹²

Clearly, then, in Wesley's eyes, the ongoing practice of slavery was nothing less than "a scandal not only to Christianity but [to] humanity [as well]."¹⁹³ It was not an institution that fostered either justice or proper relations between people. Instead, it raised profit and self-interest in an idolatrous way above everything else only to obscure the vision of the coming kingdom in which divine grace and love would reign supreme. Speaking and writing against this evil practice, undertaking a significant work of mercy on behalf of those who were persecuted and without voice, was one of the many ways that Wesley sought to love both God and neighbor.

Today and Tomorrow: What Are They Thinking about Natural Law and Politics?

During the confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas, Senator Joseph Biden grilled the judge and among other things inquired whether he espoused "a natural law that was 'bad' (one that dictated morality to individuals) or 'good' (one that upheld an individual right to personal choice in the moral sphere free from governmental interference)." ¹⁹⁴ The Senator's fear, given his political views, was most likely that Thomas's articulation of natural law might entail a restriction on human freedom, specifically the freedom to have an abortion. But Biden's query is also remarkable in that it reveals that several different understandings of natural law abound. Definitional precision is, therefore, important.

Though Erik Wolf, a German scholar, has claimed that over ninety possible definitions of natural law are possible, ¹⁹⁵ three broad themes repeatedly emerge in the midst of such diversity. First of all, some authors, especially philosophers, consider natural law to be general moral principles that are self-evident to the mind, those that are "first in the order of practical cognition." ¹⁹⁶ Since these principles are both general and self-evident, they are reputedly universal as well. Second, natural law may be conceived in terms of the "principles derived from an external order," ¹⁹⁷ an order that can be understood as created, as in Christian theology, or as simply given, as in some Ancient Greek conceptions. Observe that in this second theme the appeal is not first of all to the operations of the mind in some form of practical cognition, but to an external, and in some sense, objective order that the mind then distills. Third, a theistic approach will affirm the order of the mind and of nature but will interpret them as a consequence of a divine lawgiver. ¹⁹⁸

A number of elements, then, may make up a particular expression of natural law reasoning, and this kind of reflective thinking has been deemed valuable, especially at the level of government and politics because it can limit the powers of the state when it seeks to trample over the rights and liberties of some of its citizens, especially minorities. Thus Martin Luther King Jr., for example, challenged the *morality* of several southern state laws because they denied to African Americans what should pertain to all human beings. Put another way,

natural law can limit or even overturn positive law (legal code at the state or national level) by demonstrating, in a reasoned and articulate way, its injustice. Moreover, it is precisely the limiting and restricting power of natural law, in its appeal to a "higher law" than that expressed in legal statutes, that is so resented by some leaders who prefer not to be so restricted and who, therefore, maintain that such matters are best resolved by an appeal to the *vox populi*, or to the politics of the day.

Though King was successful in his challenge of several southern state laws that were eventually rescinded, this turn of events was likely due to the moral force that he had garnered at the time rather than to the cogency of his Thomistic natural law argumentation. For reasons that are very complicated and require knowledge of the history of ethics, natural law thinking, whether that of King seeking to overturn immoral state laws, or prolife advocates attempting to protect the life of the unborn, is currently out of vogue. This rejection, however, is not utterly ideologically driven, as some might suppose, for it cuts across party lines and political affiliation. That is, the repudiation of natural law as a viable option can be found among liberals as among conservatives, in the legal profession and without. Furthermore, the problem that this rejection presents for Methodist theologians and ethicists is considerable for so much of Wesley's ethical reasoning involved an appeal to a particular expression of natural law, not understood as general principles divorced from God, as in some Enlightenment conceptions, but as a subsidiary reflection and copy of the divine mind expressed in the fitness and relations of things and in terms of the *imago Dei*, conceptions similar to those of Thomas Aquinas.¹⁹⁹ But with the implied theological referent (in the larger scheme of things), some might question are we really talking about *natural* law anymore?

In some respects, Wesley himself was out of step with several of the leading philosophers of his age. For one thing, he understood natural law as a species of the moral law that was itself intimately linked to God as its goal or purpose. This "Thomistic" teleological approach (in its appeal to a transcendent goal) was put aside by Kant and others. Soon the language of ethics shifted from "natural law" to "natural rights" since it was believed, accurately or not, that teleological ethics in its appeal to God or to anything higher that transcends the human community would in the end deny important human rights in the pursuit of such a telos.²⁰⁰ Beyond Kant, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill severed the connection between God as a desired telos and the good in the nineteenth century by proceeding along consequentialist, utilitarian lines. In this major retooling of

ethics, "ought" and "should" were considered not in terms of any transcendent end, but with respect to what issued in the greatest good for the greatest number of people in which that good was defined principally in terms of pleasure and utility.

On a more current note, the postmodern critique of modernity offered in recent decades challenges the modernistic claim that reason is supposedly universal and therefore its judgments in terms of general moral norms can be readily applied cross-culturally. Again, several assumptions of the Enlightenment have been questioned due to the interpretive forays of Nietzsche and postmodernism's greater awareness of the social location in which moralities are constructed—elements that supposedly reveal not a universal but a local flavor. The emphasis here, then, in contrast to that of the Age of Reason, is not on commonality but diversity.

Influenced to some degree by this postmodern approach, Jean Porter in her own work, has argued that there are two ways of looking at natural law. The first is to consider it "more or less equivalent to a universal morality, whether this is seen as grounded in nature in some general sense, or more specifically in the deliverances of practical reason."²⁰¹ The second, however, entails viewing the natural law as a "specific tradition which cannot be adequately understood apart from some account of its historical development and social location."²⁰² Porter opts for the latter approach in her writings since she believes that the "cumulative weight of arguments against a strong universalist view of morality is by now overwhelming."²⁰³ And though Porter sets up an either/or choice in terms of a best approach ("Either we can establish a purely Christian morality grounded in the distinctive narratives of a tradition or we must fall back on the universally valid morality of the Enlightenment."²⁰⁴), some wonder if other options should be explored as well. For example, the limitations of this "distinctive narratives of a tradition" approach become readily apparent as Porter considers the tradition of medieval Christian ethics. Maintaining the received teaching that Mary was a perpetual virgin, many medieval ethicists rejected Gratian's definition of marriage (as involving consent of the partners and sexual intercourse) since such a definition would exclude the holy family in which sexual intercourse was supposedly forever foresworn. This means, of course, that a peculiar and strained definition of marriage, one deflected by the interests and judgments of a particular theological tradition, would now be put in place as a moral standard for the masses, for those otherwise copulating couples. In this instance, as in so many others, the deliverances of reason (beyond the tradition)

may just be in order as a much-needed corrective.

Taking a different approach, and in some ways critiquing the postmodern argument, John Finnis contends that there is, after all, a set of "basic moral principles which indicate the basic forms of human flourishing as goods to be pursued and realized, and which are in one way or another used by everyone who considers what to do."²⁰⁵ In other words, human reason can identify a number of basic precepts, along with their attendant goods, that, if pursued, would result in the betterment of the human community. A similar argument was offered by the late theist Mortimer Adler who, following a Thomistic and Aristotelian line of reasoning, broke out of the postmodern relativism by identifying a few human goods, not many, that ought to be pursued by all, regardless of social location.²⁰⁶ At any rate, though the work of Finnis is able to go beyond the postmodern predicament, without becoming dogmatic or oppressive, his basic approach is nevertheless ill-suited as a paradigm for Christian ethics, since like many of the modernists before him, Finnis develops his rather elaborate theory of natural law "without needing to advert to the question of God's existence or nature or will."²⁰⁷

A corrective to the approach of Finnis can be seen in the work of the Methodist theologian Stephen Long, which demonstrates that modern ethics basically separated God and the good with the result that morality (and, one might add, natural law) was rooted in something immanent to human nature.²⁰⁸ According to Long, Wesley himself challenged the modern ethics of Rousseau, Hume, and Voltaire simply because these philosophers had grounded ethics in " 'humanity,' 'virtue,' 'morality' or what you please."²⁰⁹ Such a move, according to Wesley, constituted a form of "atheism" since ethics and notions of natural law now operated without an appeal to God as the One who not only informs the good but also represents its highest expression.

Beyond this, Long discerns this same failure to link God to the good in current theological projects that seek to demonstrate the relevance of theology to "a grand social reality."²¹⁰ The difficulty here, as Long sees it, is that such an approach would likely subordinate "knowledge of God to some other discourse, usually to ethics, political philosophy, or to social sciences (including economics and marketing)."²¹¹ In other words, the church's story, the gospel itself, would probably be subsumed under a different narrative, whereby the specific theological concerns of the inculcation of holy virtues and the restoration of the *imago Dei* would be muted if not outright lost. Lest there be misunderstanding, it

must be immediately noted that Long is not arguing for either quietism or for inaction on the social and political levels. Instead, he is calling for a vigorous and carefully considered moral theology that not only identifies God and the good but also is relevant to all the many dimensions of human existence: personal, social, and political. And though Long has indeed made the case for a theologically informed ethic, what he calls moral theology, that should be operative in ethical discussions on the part of the church, he nevertheless has not laid out a detailed positive program as to how this can occur on the social and political dimensions (with appropriate checks and balances), especially in terms of the consequences for those *outside* the church.

Aware of this predicament and the difficulty it poses for social and political action on the part of the church, Robert Drinan, Jesuit and former congressman, has noted that many international law experts today believe that "the advancement of human rights will be better off without the influence or voice of religion."²¹² Why is this so? It is simply because, as Drinan points out, "they have an abundance of evidence to support their position."²¹³ To illustrate, millions of people perished during the carnage of the religious wars of the seventeenth century in which Roman Catholics and Protestants killed one another and Germany was virtually decimated. More recently, over one million people were slaughtered in the name of God "in the orgy of religious killing"²¹⁴ that occurred during the partitioning of India and Pakistan during the twentieth century. As a priest, Drinan, of course, is not arguing for an utterly secular approach at the political level, and he, therefore, cautions that a strict separation of church and state "can cause churches to become marginalized."²¹⁵ However, unlike some of his theological colleagues, both Roman Catholic and Protestant who prefer traditional natural law appeals, Drinan does not believe that human rights laws exalt secularism, but they do "insist that believers may not turn persons without faith into second-class citizens or worse."²¹⁶ Accordingly, this Catholic ethicist, in the absence of a clearly articulated public ethic, informed theologically by natural law and other ethical resources from the church, has basically opted for the international community of academics and activists on human rights for many of his moral judgments on the political level. Catholics, Drinan believes, should find this approach congenial since Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, who became Pope John XXIII, collaborated in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights drafted in 1948.

In a way similar to his fellow priest Robert Drinan, Hans Küng maintains that the church does not get a free pass, so to speak, when it enters the social and

political dimensions. Indeed, there is nothing more heady than to believe that God, the Almighty, is behind one's moral judgments as one enters the public arena for the sake of reform. Appeals to the divine can easily be slapped atop all sorts of all-too-human projects, whereby men and women are sacrificed in the name of some higher good as eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers have already pointed out so well. To prevent this malaise, whereby theologians and ethicists at times confuse their own self-interested or ethnocentric thinking for the reality of the kingdom of God (*Deus vult!*), Küng contends that religious initiatives at the public level, whether from the church or synagogue or mosque, must meet three basic criteria. First of all, the positive criterion highlights that religion must serve "the virtue of humanity";²¹⁷ in other words, it must foster human good and well being. Second, the negative criterion underscores that religious morals, rites, and institutions must not hinder human beings in their identity, meaningfulness, and value.²¹⁸ Or in the words of the apostle Paul, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). And finally, a particular religion must also be measured by its own normative doctrine or practice.²¹⁹ And in the case of Christianity this would, of course, include the Ten Commandments as well as the Sermon on the Mount.

Clearly, not all Christian theologians and ethicists will be pleased with Küng's proposal. They will perhaps argue that an alien, secular ethic is being employed to judge the actions of the church or that humanity itself is subtly being offered as the highest value. This is a significant criticism and therefore should not be taken lightly. But is there any real love of God that does not also issue in the universal love of neighbor? Again, given the history of the church, should not her power and repeated hegemonic tendencies be checked at the political level in the interest of broader humanity, especially with respect to those who are outside the church and who have no intention of ever entering therein? Is this what the universal love of God and neighbor would look like in very mixed, pluralistic societies?

In light of these difficult and troubling questions found among a variety of approaches, the dilemma to be faced in the days ahead is this: on the one hand, the church must and should bring its best moral and spiritual reflections to the leading issues of the day. And natural law reasoning understood in a theistic way, not as an abstract principle but as a reflection of humanity created in the image and likeness of God, should be brought to bear in order protect the poor, minorities, and the very least of all. And it is precisely here where the restrictive

and limiting power of natural law, which Dr. King understood so well, can prove to be of enormous value to the culture as inordinately powerful groups seek to treat others as a mere commodity, as a means to some other preferred end. On the other hand, the church's deliberations and actions have at times not reflected the universal love of God and neighbor, as was so publicly touted, but were deflected by a self-interest and a parochialism that not only spawned "the other" but also created, as history bears witness, "enemies." To be sure, the appeal to God, whether in Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, can function as a heady narcotic for some, investing their all-too-human, even prejudicial, thinking with an aura of sanctity it could not otherwise attain. How, then, can the church act in the name of God on the public level, out of rightly held faith commitments, while at the same time recognizing the tremendous diversity and pluralistic nature of postmodern societies so that the "other" is not persecuted but is actually cherished and loved? This is the enduring challenge of our age.

Chapter Eight

Entire Sanctification: The Purity and Excellence of Holy Love

*Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast,
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find that second rest;
Take away our bent to sinning, Alpha and Omega be,
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.*

—Charles Wesley, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," The United Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), Hymn #384.

Though Wesley held high standards with respect to the church, and though he labored to inculcate scriptural Christianity at every opportunity, he nevertheless critiqued the believer's church model, at least on one level, in that he frankly recognized that a church, even one that enjoys the graces of an evangelical reforming order within it, will undoubtedly remain a mixed company of both sinners and saints. As such, the appeal to the beauty of Christ, the purity of the moral law, as well as the call to repentance, is ever appropriate, not only for the unregenerate but also for those who are genuinely the sons and daughters of God. This twofold repentance, what Wesley called "legal" and "evangelical" repentance, displays the dual nature of sin as both act and being.

On the way to entire sanctification, then, our current topic, believers are convicted and repent not of actual sin but of inbred sin. In other words, Wesley assumed that those who are justified and born of God have "power over outward and inward sin, even from the moment [they] are justified."¹ He, therefore, insisted that "the question is not concerning . . . whether a child of God *commits sin* or no. We all agree and earnestly maintain, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' "² Consequently, those who are not free from the power and dominion of

sin, the second liberty of the gospel, must repeat the first works afresh and seek to be delivered from the slavery, the genuine bondage, of the ongoing dominion of sin. Indeed, for those who have mistakenly identified the cycle of falling, repenting of actual sin and being restored in grace as the very substance of the practical Christian life, there can be no call for a second evangelical repentance, for a much different work of grace is clearly in order *first*.

Evangelical Repentance

For those believers, however, who have realized justifying and regenerating graces in their lives, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, a further word of repentance awaits. This second, evangelical repentance entails a deep conviction not only that they are not yet whole, but also of their demerit and of an "utter helplessness" to retain anything apart from the grace of God.³ This further role for the moral law in its convicting power on the way to entire sanctification is evident in Wesley's following observation:

[W]e have not done with this law: for it is still of unspeakable use, *first*, in convincing us of the sin that *yet remains* both in our hearts and lives . . . *secondly*, in deriving strength from our Head into his living members, whereby he empowers them to do what his law commands; and *thirdly*, in confirming our hope of whatsoever it commands and we have not attained.⁴

Put another way, believers are convicted, through Word and Spirit, of the carnal nature that remains, even in a child of God, of all the unholy tempers and affections that still pollute the heart. Wesley puts it this way: "He is saved from sin; yet not entirely: it *remains*, though it does not *reign*."⁵ Illustrating this truth more clearly, Wesley points out that one "may have *anger* [or pride or lust for that matter] in him, yea, and a strong *propensity* [my italics] to furious anger, without *giving way* to it [Wesley's emphasis]."⁶ In other words, having sin within and yielding to it are two very different things. "Christ indeed cannot *reign*, where sin *reigns*; neither will he *dwell* where any sin is *allowed*," Wesley cautions; "But he *is* and *dwells* in the heart of every believer who is fighting against all sin; although it be 'not' yet purified."⁷

Redemption, then, is not accomplished in one grand stroke, nor is it an uninterrupted process of gradual, barely distinguishable changes; instead, a second distinct work of grace is needed. In fact, it was Wesley himself, and not the American holiness movement, who first championed the notion of a "second" work of grace as the following excerpts from Wesley's letters demonstrate:

- "We should neither be forward nor backward in believing those who think they have attained the *second blessing*."⁸ (Letter to Thomas Olivers, 1757)
- "I believe within five weeks six in one class have received remission of sins

and five in one band received a *second blessing*."⁹ (Letter to Mrs. Crosby, 1761)

- "Never be ashamed of the old Methodist doctrine. Press all believers to go on to perfection. Insist everywhere on the *second blessing* as receivable in a moment, and receivable now, by simple faith."¹⁰ (Letter to Samuel Bardsley, 1772)
- "Exhort all the little ones that believe to make haste and not delay the time of receiving the *second blessing*; and be not backward to declare what God has done for your soul to any that truly fear Him."¹¹ (Letter to Jane Salkeld, 1772)
- "It is exceeding certain that God did give you the *second blessing*, properly so called. He delivered you from the root of bitterness, from inbred as well as actual sin."¹² (Letter to Mrs. Barton, 1774)
- "Certainly till persons experience something of the *second awakening*, till they are feelingly convinced of inbred sin so as earnestly to groan for deliverance from it, we need not speak to them of *present* sanctification [Wesley's emphasis]."¹³ (Letter to Ann Bolton, 1775)

Clearly, the language of "secondness" was very much a part of Wesley's own, for the leprosy of the soul is not cleansed "till it shall please our Lord to speak to our hearts again, to 'speak the second time, "Be clean." ' "¹⁴ And elsewhere he writes, settling some disputes about the temporal elements involved: "But if there be no such second change, if there be no instantaneous deliverance after justification, if there be none but a gradual work of God (that there is a gradual work none denies) then we must be content, as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death."¹⁵

Works Suitable for Repentance

In 1766, in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley posed the question, "How are we to wait for this change [of entire sanctification]?"¹⁶ To which he replied: "Not in careless indifference, or indolent inactivity; but in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily."¹⁷ Assessing this strong role for the moral law in the life of believers, Lindström maintained that the spiritually earnest could not "acquire the faith through which entire sanctification was bestowed unless [they] had sought it in obedience to the commandments and ordinances of God."¹⁸

This generous place for obedience, works, and the moral law demonstrated here and elsewhere does not contradict the Conference's earlier (1744) judgments, especially in terms of justifying faith and grace, once it is realized that it, like Wesley, made an important distinction between becoming a Christian (the transition from sinner to initially sanctified) and remaining one (on the way to entire sanctification). To illustrate, during the Calvinist controversy in 1771, Wesley reminded some preachers who were critical of the strong role for works in the Christian life that he himself had earlier affirmed: "But methinks I would rather answer, We are sliding away from our question, which is not, how we *gain*, but how *retain* the favour of God."¹⁹ That is, for Wesley, regenerating or initially sanctifying grace is both potent and efficacious: It empowers believers, through the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit, for obedience and vigorous service.

Accordingly, Wesley urged Christian believers on the way to Christian perfection to undertake both works of mercy and piety. "It is by patient continuance in well doing," he observes, "in using all the grace which is already given you, that you are to seek the whole gift of God, the entire renewal of your soul, the full deliverance from sin."²⁰ In terms of works of mercy in particular, believers should serve the poor with vigor and painstaking sacrifice by ministering to both their material needs *and* spiritual needs. Indeed, in 1748, Wesley wrote concerning those engaged in ministry to the downtrodden that "He doth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of men." But then he added, indicating his preference for a full-orbed ministry: "*How much more* does he rejoice if he can do any good to the soul of any man!"²¹ And two years later,

Wesley continued this theme in his sermon "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Thirteenth" and wrote:

Over and above all this, are you zealous of good works? Do you, as you have time, do good to all men? Do you feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction? Do you visit those that are sick? Relieve them that are in prison? Is any a stranger and you take him in? Friend, *come up higher*. . . Does he enable you to bring sinners from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God?²²

Beyond this, late in his career, Wesley repeated these same judgments, no doubt for emphasis, in his sermon "The Reward of Righteousness": "He [our Lord] undoubtedly designed that we should be equally abundant in works of spiritual mercy. He died to 'purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of ' all 'good works'; zealous, *above all*, to 'save souls from death', and thereby 'hide a multitude of sins.' "²³

Two points are noteworthy in light of the preceding evidence: first, for Wesley at least, a part of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself always involves the exercise of both material gifts and spiritual talents; it entails the employment of all those gifts and graces that will enhance the physical well-being of the poor *and* their spiritual character. Second, and perhaps more important, though the material needs of the neighbor have chronological priority (they are the very first things that must be done), they clearly do not have valuational priority in Wesley's thought,²⁴ for their fulfillment prepares the way, to use Wesley's own terminology, for things of *greater importance*. Once again in his sermon "On Visiting the Sick," Wesley instructs his visitors and writes: And if your delicacy will not permit you to imitate those truly honourable ladies, by abasing yourselves in the manner which they do, by performing the lowest offices for the sick, you may, however, without humbling yourselves so far, supply them with whatever they want. And you may administer *help of a more excellent kind*, by supplying their spiritual wants; instructing them (if they need such instruction) in the first principles of religion.²⁵

Another way Wesley explored the necessity of works suitable for repentance prior to entire sanctification is in terms of "works of piety," a phrase which is used most often as an equivalent expression for the means of grace. Thus, in answer to the question, "what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification?" Wesley writes: "First, all works of piety, such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet; receiving the Supper of the Lord; searching the Scriptures by hearing, reading, meditating;

and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health allows."²⁶

Observe in the works just enumerated above that these channels of grace have both a personal context as well as a broader, corporate one. Believers, then, are not only to do such things as pray in their closets, and thereby develop a deeper level of sanctity and attentiveness to God's Spirit, but they are also obliged to participate in the public life of the church, most notably in receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and in hearing the Word of God read and proclaimed. These outward words, signs, and actions, then, are ordained as part of the ordinary channels by which God may convey entirely sanctifying grace to believers.²⁷ Simply put, these works are indeed suitable for evangelical repentance. "It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification, for a full salvation from our sins."²⁸

It should be evident by now that, for Wesley, repentance and works suitable for repentance are in some sense *necessary* for entire sanctification. The imperative mood, in other words, is ever appropriate in the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* due to preceding, enabling grace. In fact, the same distinctions that we have encountered earlier in terms of justification are paralleled in the approach to entire sanctification as the following chart reveals:

Distinctions Pertaining to Repentance, Works, and Faith	
Not in the Same Sense	Not in the Same Degree
Repentance Is Remotely Necessary	Repentance Does Not Entirely Sanctify
Fruits Even More Remotely So	Fruits Do Not Entirely Sanctify
Faith is Directly (Proximately) Necessary	Faith Alone Entirely Sanctifies
Co-operant or Responsible Grace	Free Grace
Catholic Emphasis	Protestant Emphasis

Thus, in his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," written in 1765, Wesley maintains that "though it be allowed that both this repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation, yet they are not necessary either in the *same sense* with faith or in the *same degree*."²⁹ As with the doctrine of justification, these distinctions "not in the same sense" and "not in the same degree" carry many of the nuances used by Wesley to articulate, on the one hand, the *necessity* of repentance and its fruits prior to entire sanctification and, on the other hand,

that evangelical repentance and its fruits do *not* entirely sanctify.

Concerning the first distinction, "not in the same sense," Wesley affirms that evangelical repentance and its fruits are remotely *necessary* to (entire) sanctification, if there be time and opportunity, "in order to the continuance of . . . faith, as well as the increase of it."³⁰ Moreover, given the unfortunate fact, as Wesley himself had noted on more than one occasion, that most Christian believers will not be sanctified entirely until just prior to the crisis of death—a point that will be developed below—it then becomes virtually imperative, given the time factors involved, that believers repent and zealously obey the express will of God as manifested in Christ and the moral law and thereby perform works of piety, mercy, and the like in the meantime. These works, then, are in some sense *necessary* for entire sanctification. In many instances, they prepare the believer for the richest reception of grace, for the purifying efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, this necessity is further underscored by the progressive nature of Wesley's *ordo salutis*. That is, as grace increases—from prevenient, to convincing, to justifying, to regenerating—so, too, does human responsibility to improve this bounty of God. In short, if Wesley could maintain that repentance and its fruits are in some sense *necessary* to justification, then he could even more emphatically maintain that evangelical repentance and its fruits are necessary for entire sanctification since it is not prevenient grace, but the justifying and regenerating graces of God that precede them.

Now if the phrase "not in the same sense" allows Wesley to affirm the *necessity* of repentance and works meet for repentance prior to entire sanctification, "if there be time and opportunity," then the second phrase "not in the same degree" makes it clear that evangelical repentance and its fruits, as valuable as they are, *do not sanctify*. To illustrate, Wesley points out, once again, in his "Scripture Way of Salvation":

Though it be allowed that both this repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation, yet they are not necessary . . . in the *same degree* . . . for these fruits are only necessary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwise a man may be sanctified *without them* [my italics]. But he cannot be sanctified without faith. Likewise let a man have ever so much of this repentance, or ever so many good works, yet all this does not at all avail: he is not sanctified till he believes. But the moment he believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less of this repentance, he is sanctified.³¹

With his distinction "not in the same degree," then, Wesley was able to affirm, without contradiction to his earlier distinction, that believers may be

entirely sanctified without the fruits that flow from evangelical repentance since there may be no opportunity for their performance. He is more cautious, however, in terms of evangelical *repentance* itself (just as he was in terms of legal repentance) and notes that one may be entirely sanctified "with more or less of this repentance." Here, then, repentance seems to be necessary for full salvation, since it apparently needs little time for its occurrence. Nevertheless, it, too, does *not* sanctify. Recall Wesley's language just cited: "Likewise let a man have ever so much of this repentance . . . yet all this does not at all avail: he is not sanctified *till* he believes." So then, with the distinction "not in the same degree" in his theological vocabulary, Wesley was able to declare that repentance and its fruits, such as works of piety or mercy, though now in some sense necessary to entire sanctification, *do not sanctify*. Once again, it is the free grace of God, received through faith, that sanctifies. Only the Most High can make the saint entirely holy. Such is the work of God *alone*.

Faith

In the earlier chapters on justification and regeneration, we demonstrated how Peter Böhler helped Wesley appreciate that the two principal fruits of saving faith are peace (from a sense of forgiveness) and power (the enabling grace of the new birth), or to express these same fruits somewhat differently, it is happiness and holiness that characterize redeeming faith. Beyond this, Böhler pointed Wesley to the Scriptures by means of which he became convinced that these two distinct gifts, a forensic one (justification) and a participatory one (initial sanctification), are *received* by grace through faith alone. In 1741, however, after mining his own Anglican tradition, Wesley made a crucial move beyond Böhler and applied these insights elsewhere in his practical theology and thereby connected the holy living tradition that he so loved to the Reformation emphasis on the sheer gratuity of grace by maintaining that entire sanctification is an utter gift from God and like justification is therefore *received* by faith alone.³² To illustrate, much later in 1765, demonstrating the continuity of his thought, Wesley put the matter this way: "faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to sanctification. It remains that faith is the *only* [my italics] condition which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to sanctification."³³

Wesley preserved this key insight with respect to faith that can be traced back to Böhler (and to Luther behind him) and to the Church of England by developing a distinct rhetoric in describing how perfect love is instilled in the human heart. Thus, in his journal and correspondence, Wesley began to write of "simple faith" and "naked faith" as the way entire sanctification is realized in order to underscore how freely this grace is given by God. In terms of the first emphasis, for example, Wesley remarked in 1761 that he had "earnestly exhorted all who were sensible of their wants and athirst for holiness, to look unto Jesus, to come to him *just as they were* and receive *all* his promises. And surely it will not be long before some of these also are fully saved by *simple* [my italics] faith."³⁴ Moreover, in a letter to John Valton, drafted in 1773, Wesley counseled him to "be all a Methodist; and strongly insist on *full salvation* to be received *now* by simple *faith*."³⁵ And in 1786, Wesley wrote to Peter Walker as follows: "Only exhort all that have believed to go on to perfection, and everywhere insist upon both justification and full sanctification as receivable *now* by simple faith."³⁶

In terms of his second emphasis, Wesley observed to R. C. Brackenbury in 1780 that "the war will not cease before you attain [entire sanctification] but by your attaining the promise. And if you look for it by *naked* faith, why may you not receive it now?"³⁷ And five years later, in a very pastoral letter to Miss Loxdale, who had lost what Wesley himself had called the "second blessing," he counseled: "You unquestionably did enjoy a measure of His pure and perfect love. And as you received it at first by *naked* faith, just so you may receive it again; and who knows how soon?"³⁸ And finally, the following year Wesley penned a letter to Mrs. Bowman and urged her to go on to perfection: "Expect continually the end of your faith, the full salvation of your soul."³⁹ Wesley wrote. "You know, whenever it is given, it is to be received *only* by *naked* faith."⁴⁰

Even the most basic and rudimentary assessment of Wesley's doctrine of salvation has to realize that justification (and regeneration), on the one hand, and entire sanctification, on the other hand, are the two principal foci of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*. That is, they are distinct, even unique, points of attention. The next, more sophisticated, level of judgment goes beyond these initial observations to discern the similar, indeed, the parallel discussions that Wesley offers in his writings in terms of both justification and entire sanctification. Thus, the parallelism that we have encountered with respect to repentance and works suitable for repentance, in terms of both similarities and differences when justification and entire sanctification are compared (see charts on 284, 292, and 301), is evident in Wesley's understanding of *faith* as well. And this is one of the more prominent ways that he underscored that entire sanctification, once again, is received by faith *alone*. For example, in his summary sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," produced in 1765, Wesley observes: "I have continually testified in private and in public that we are sanctified, as well as justified, by faith."⁴¹ Even more emphatically, in this same piece he points out, as noted in chapter 6: "*Exactly* as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the *only* condition of sanctification, *exactly* as it is of justification."⁴²

Beyond this, Wesley defines both justifying and sanctifying faith in terms of a divine evidence or conviction. But here the similarity ends, for in justifying faith the divine evidence or conviction is "a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins."⁴³ But in entirely sanctifying faith, the divine evidence or conviction is "understood in a peculiar sense, *different from* that wherein we believed in

order to justification."⁴⁴ Consequently, in answer to the question, "But what is that faith whereby we are sanctified, saved from sin and perfected in love?" Wesley replies:

It is a divine evidence and conviction, first, that God hath promised it in the Holy Scripture. . . . It is a divine evidence and conviction, secondly, that what God hath promised he is *able* to perform. . . . It is, thirdly, a divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it *now*. . . . To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us *now*, there needs to be added one thing more, a divine evidence and conviction that *he doth it*.⁴⁵

The differences, then, between these two works of grace are due, once again, to the spiritual growth that has taken place in the meantime. Therefore, justifying faith is not the end or goal of the Christian life, but only its beginning. There is a far deeper work that God wishes to accomplish in the soul,⁴⁶ even the cleansing of the soul from the very being of sin.

The Balance of Wesley's Conception of Grace

"Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)

When one pays attention to the language that Wesley employs on the way to perfect love in terms of repentance and suitable works, on the one hand, and entirely sanctifying faith, on the other hand, it can be determined, after considerable reflection, that Wesley is actually drawing not from one but two distinct understandings of grace. However, when these different conceptions of grace are brought together in the same paragraph, they can prove to be a puzzle for some readers. For example, in 1759, Wesley's well-worked distinctions between process (on the way to perfection) and instantaneousness (entire sanctification itself) are also an important window on the tension between *possibility* and *actuality*. Thus, if perfection itself is subsumed under a processive paradigm, if it is ever a flying goal as Outler put it, always moving, then it is never actualized or realized in the warp and woof of life. So understood, perfection is always just beyond the horizon and forever remains elusive. One is always approaching this qualitative difference of *purity* but never actually realizing it. Wesley's instantaneous motif, then, drawn from his rich Protestant heritage, held the salient truth in place that process, in this second sense, must not remain forever open-ended, as ever a possibility to be actualized, but must *in time* eventuate in the closure that marks the realization of qualitatively distinct graces, even the difference between an impure heart and a pure one. Again, if entire sanctification occurs, if it is actualized, there will be a moment of its instantiation (whether that moment is recognized or not), for it marks a change not in degree but in quality; it is, for want of better terminology, a "threshold transformation." Wesley wrote to Dorothy Furly as follows: "All who expect to be sanctified at all expect to be sanctified by faith. But meantime they know that faith will not be given but to them that obey. Remotely, therefore,

the blessing depends on our works, although immediately on simple faith."⁴⁷ Does Wesley contradict himself here as some of his detractors had claimed? Are these judgments a farrago, a hodgepodge of notions, confused in conception and ultimately irreconcilable? We think not, because in this context, Wesley is not only employing two distinct notions of grace, but also operating out of two separate paradigms (informed by differing theological traditions) that in his quest for the proper Christian faith, and catholicity properly understood, he ultimately reconciled in his practical theology.

During the twentieth century, as noted earlier, George Croft Cell popularized the notion that Wesley's theology entails a "necessary synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness."⁴⁸ From our perspective, however, the discussions of Wesley's views of repentance and works along the way already reveal that he also had a "catholic" understanding of grace, one that embraced a divine/human cooperation, whereby one grows incrementally, and by degrees, as one responds to the *initiatives* of God. As we have already indicated in chapter 5 this working together with God does not grow out of human initiative but emerges out of the *response* to divine prior action. So understood, this synergism reveals the imperative mood in Wesley's theology, highlights the process of transformation in redemption in a relational way, and, in terms of ethics, illustrates how believers grow daily in holy virtues, inculcated by increasing degrees over time.

This "catholic" theme of grace can be amply demonstrated from Wesley's writings. To illustrate, in 1765, Wesley notes in his journal that "it is impossible that any should *retain* what they receive, without *improving* it."⁴⁹ A few years later, in 1765, he remarks, "To use the grace given is the certain way to obtain more grace. To use all the faith you have will bring an increase of faith."⁵⁰ And in his sermon "An Israelite Indeed," composed late in his career, Wesley points out that "whoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it,"⁵¹ an observation that could easily invite the charge of "popery" if not properly understood. And lastly, in 1786, Wesley observes: "And this [the mighty power of God] can work a complete deliverance: his grace is sufficient for you. But not unless you are a worker together with him."⁵²

An equally problematic interpretive error, however, lacking the conjunctive balance of Wesley's seasoned theology, consists in merely developing this catholic, synergistic conception of grace in its emphasis on process to the repudiation of other considerations. The consequence of this hermeneutical

move is to fail to take into account in a significant way that Wesley did indeed have a Protestant understanding of grace as Professor Cell had maintained. To be sure, Wesley's affirmation that one is entirely sanctified by faith in the same way as one is justified bespeaks of the free grace of God that is not caught up in a synergistic, co-operant paradigm, but in a real sense is the work of God *alone*. Moreover, the sheer gratuity of grace in this context reveals the "giftedness" mood in Wesley's theology, underscores the crisis aspects of redemption (corresponding to the two foci of the *ordo salutis*), and, in terms of ethics, displays that believers may advance in grace quite rapidly due to their openness to *receive* the divine benefit, which is so freely lavished upon them.

This "protestant" theme of grace can likewise be amply demonstrated from Wesley's writings. "The author of faith and salvation is God *alone*." Wesley notes, "He is the sole Giver of every good gift."⁵³ Moreover, not only does Wesley contend that "holiness is the work of God,"⁵⁴ but he also maintains that the Most High "doth it of his own good pleasure."⁵⁵ In other words, divine freedom, and yes, even sovereignty, determines the timetable for crucial receptions of grace. And Wesley was fully aware of this dynamic (which would have surprised some of his Calvinist friends), especially when he wrote to George Merryweather in 1766: "And He [God] does in some instances delay to give either justifying or sanctifying grace for reasons which are not discovered to us. These are some of those secrets of His government, which it hath pleased Him to reserve in His own breast."⁵⁶

Beyond this, Wesley puzzled over the reality that entirely sanctifying grace was freely bestowed "on some even before they ask for it,"⁵⁷ while others had "to wait for it perhaps twenty, thirty, or forty years; nay, and others till a few hours or even minutes before their spirits return to him."⁵⁸ And this same theme of free grace is unmistakable in Wesley's classic *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in which he affirms that sometimes God "does the work of many years in a few weeks; perhaps in a week, a day, an hour. He justifies or sanctifies both those who have done or suffered *nothing*, and who have not had time for a gradual growth either in light or grace."⁵⁹ This and other pertinent material has led Colin Williams to observe: "It is this emphasis upon the gift of perfect love to be received by faith that distinguishes his doctrine of sanctification by faith alone from the Roman Catholic ladder of merit scheme of perfection."⁶⁰ Or as Outler put it: "For Wesley, the doctrine of perfection was yet another way of celebrating the *sovereignty* of grace."⁶¹

In developing this Protestant emphasis Wesley did in fact maintain that since entirely sanctifying grace is an utter gift of God, not absolutely dependent on works as a prior condition, it can therefore be received now. In other words, those justified and born of God do not have either to *be* or *do* something else first in order to be entirely sanctified. This is a truth that the catholic paradigm struggles to acknowledge and by which it is often perplexed. Nevertheless, Wesley clearly affirmed:

And by this token may you surely know whether you seek it by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done *first, before* you are sanctified. You think, "I must first *be* or *do* thus or thus." Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it as *you are*: and if as you are, then expect it *now*.⁶²

In summary, Wesley's careful balance and two-fold understanding of grace, both Protestant and Catholic, must be taken into account lest an un-nuanced nearly semi-Pelagian account of his practical theology emerge, or one that may devolve into fanaticism or quietism in neglecting the suitable means of evangelical repentance by which such bountiful grace is so often communicated in the midst of works of piety, mercy, and the like—if *there be time and opportunity*. Wesley's practical theology, then, must be interpreted not simply through a Catholic or Protestant paradigm, but through the dialectic of *both* held in appropriate tension. The following chart displays these two aspects of a larger, more appropriate conjunction.

Wesley's Understanding of Entirely Sanctifying Grace					
	Work of God Alone	Divine/Human Co-operation <i>Prior to Entire Sanctification</i> (Synergism)	Initiative by God (Prevenience in a broad sense)	Emphasis on Instantiation Received by Faith Alone ("Instant," "Moment" Language)	Process of Divine and Human Working (Prepares One; in Some Sense)
Protestant Emphasis	X		X	X	
Catholic Emphasis		X	X		X

As the chart above makes clear, the distinguishing characteristic between

Wesley's catholic emphasis (co-operant or responsible grace) and his protestant one (free grace) is not the *priority* of divine action. Clearly, in both paradigms the initiative is taken not by sin-laden creatures (inbred sin) but by the Creator. The real difference, however, consists in how that divine initiative and action is understood. In the catholic paradigm, on the one hand, it is comprehended and explicated utterly in a synergistic context. In the protestant paradigm, on the other hand, such action is viewed in terms of the freedom and utter graciousness of the divine being that it constitutes, in a real sense, the work of God *alone*. This work must first of all be received before there is even the possibility of response. This soteriological step, though easily neglected, is vital in order to hold together Wesley's twofold understanding of grace.

Furthermore, when this catholic paradigm is brought to bear as the exclusive interpretive model of Wesley's practical theology, some may mistakenly believe that they have all the bases covered, so to speak. In this view, for example, both divine initiative and human response are affirmed along with an emphasis on the former. However, what is missing, what falls through the gaps, is precisely what Wesley learned from Moravians, Pietists, and his own Anglican tradition: God is so good, gracious, and merciful that the Most High works alone, giving benefits not on the basis of prior human working, but out of the sheer bounty and richness of the divine love. In other words, the proper conjunction here, which depicts Wesley's twofold understanding of grace is not merely divine and human working (even if the emphasis is on the former), for that synergism in itself constitutes only one *half* of the larger, more generous conjunction that Wesley painstakingly held in place: Not simply co-operant grace, but the conjunction of co-operant and free grace.

The Temporal Dimensions of Entire Sanctification

It is precisely this twofold understanding of grace that brings clarity to the temporal dimensions of entire sanctification. Thus, for Wesley, the issue of time with respect to Christian perfection must be conceived not simply in a chronological way but also, and perhaps more important, in a soteriological way. In other words, the question of process and instantaneousness is not only a reflection of the larger issue of faith and works but it also helps to display, once again, Wesley's catholic and protestant conceptions of grace.

It should, therefore, come as no surprise to learn that Wesley taught that sanctification (broadly understood) is *both* gradual *and* instantaneous. Thus, in a parallel discussion to what he had already written in terms of the approach to the justification and the new birth, Wesley remarks:

A gradual work of grace constantly precedes the instantaneous work both of justification and sanctification. But the work itself (of sanctification as well as justification) is undoubtedly instantaneous. As after a gradual conviction of the guilt and power of sin you was justified in a moment, so after a gradually increasing conviction of inbred sin you will be sanctified in a moment.⁶³

Actually even greater clarity is called for in this context in order to discern Wesley's vital teaching. We must, first of all, distinguish sanctification as a process (catholic element) that leads up to *entire* sanctification, from entire sanctification itself as an instantaneous *actualization* (protestant element) of grace. Second, as noted in the chapter on the new birth, we must also be aware of a difference between psychological time (which can be loose, amorphous, and at times even confused) and soteriological time (which underscores the instantiation of grace and the divine role in redemption). With these distinctions in place, we are now in a better position to understand why Wesley insisted that entire sanctification as a second work of grace must be "undoubtedly instantaneous," as just noted above. In fact, in 1789, Wesley wrote to Sarah Rutter: "Gradual sanctification may increase from the time you was justified; but full deliverance from sin, I believe, is *always* instantaneous—at least, I never yet knew an exception."⁶⁴

If, however, one fails to distinguish between the process of sanctification, that is, growing more holy in increasing *degrees*, and entire sanctification itself, being *now* pure in heart, a change in *quality*, and if one also operates almost

exclusively out of a catholic synergistic paradigm, then one will likely (and mistakenly) conclude that entire sanctification itself is a process. A case can be made that perhaps even Outler himself, the dean of Wesley Studies, made such a claim in his love of ecumenicity and Eastern Orthodoxy and thereby offered the language that could so easily lead to both misunderstanding and misinterpretation by subsequent generations. He wrote:

But the idea of perfection as a dynamic *process* with a flying goal did not take its mature form until, finally, Wesley found his way back to the great devotional traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy—Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Macarius of Egypt, and others.⁶⁵

However, the idea of perfection (entire sanctification) as a dynamic process as Outler put it may actually be understood in two key ways: In the first sense, process may refer to growth in grace that does not entail a qualitative difference of the heart (the transition from impurity to purity, for example) but refers instead to *who* the believer is, as a unique identity, in terms of any number of gifts, graces, and talents. For example, though Jesus Christ was pure in heart throughout his life, yet as a true human being, he, like others, grew in wisdom, grace, and age. In other words, Christ underwent a process of growth and development and in a certain sense became "more," though that "more" was always pure at every step along the way. In a similar, though not exact, fashion, Wesley affirmed that "how much so ever any man hath attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to 'grow in grace', and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Saviour."⁶⁶ Now if this is what Outler meant by perfection itself being a process, then we are in full agreement. Perfection in this first sense does indeed admit of growth. "One perfected in love," Wesley affirms, "may grow in grace far swifter than he did before."⁶⁷

But if the notion of perfection as a process is understood in a second sense, drawing on a "catholic" paradigm, such that the qualitative difference of purity itself entailed in Christian perfection is understood to be brought into being through process and therefore in an incremental way, then we must disagree in light of the weight of Wesley's own writings. In other words, Wesley's well-worked distinctions between process (on the way to perfection) and instantaneousness (entire sanctification itself) are also an important window on the tension between *possibility* and *actuality*. Thus, if perfection itself is subsumed under a processive paradigm, if it is ever a flying goal as Outler put it, always moving, then it is never actualized or realized in the warp and woof of life. So understood, perfection is always just beyond the horizon and forever

remains elusive. One is always approaching this qualitative difference of *purity* but never actually realizing it. Wesley's instantaneous motif, then, drawn from his rich Protestant heritage, held the salient truth in place that process, in this second sense, must not remain forever open-ended, as ever a possibility to be actualized, but must *in time* eventuate in the closure that marks the realization of qualitatively distinct graces, even the difference between an impure heart and a pure one. Again, if entire sanctification occurs, if it is actualized, there will be a moment of its instantiation (whether that moment is recognized or not), for it marks a change not in degree but in quality; it is, for want of better terminology, a "threshold transformation."

Moreover, those who emphasize the processive nature of the order of salvation to the virtual exclusion of this instantaneous aspect will fail to see that entire sanctification is a whole work, an entire work, as the name suggests, a wholeness and an entirety that can only be lost in a nearly exclusive emphasis on process and Christian nurture along the way. The genius of Wesley as a practical theologian, then, is that he held both these elements together, process and realization, a gradual element and an instantaneous one, in a subtle and well-crafted tension. Yes, there will be continual growth in grace, even after the grace of Christian perfection has been realized. But it will be a *pure* heart that continues to grow in the favor of God. The completeness of this work, therefore, need not be denied in the name of nurture.⁶⁸

Though Wesley clearly claimed that both justification and Christian perfection are instantaneous events that are preceded and followed by a gradual work, nevertheless, the imagery he employed in each case was markedly different. Concerning regeneration, it will be recalled that Wesley used the imagery of birth with great effectiveness to underscore the instantaneous element. But with respect to entire sanctification, he appealed not to the imagery of birth, but to that of death:

From the moment we are justified, there may be a gradual sanctification, a growing in grace, a daily advance in the knowledge and love of God. And if sin cease before death, there must, in the nature of the thing, be an instantaneous change; there must be a last moment wherein it does not exist, and a first moment wherein it does not.⁶⁹

The first image, then, entails the beginning of sanctification, being born to God; the second image, reflective of the passage of time, entails an end to the carnal nature, a death to sin.⁷⁰ And Wesley did indeed consider the objection that some might not be aware of the moment of entire sanctification through an

appeal to what we have called psychological considerations. "It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies," Wesley notes; "yet there is an instant in which life ceases. And if ever sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it."⁷¹

Yet another error with respect to the temporal elements of entire sanctification concerns the matter of utterly equating perfect love with adult Christian states or what can be called chronological maturity. Spiritually sensitive as he was, Wesley forthrightly recognized that the very highest graces can characterize children who obviously do not have the wealth of experience that adults do. It is important, therefore, neither to underestimate the spiritual life of children nor to misprize their love. And since Christian perfection is principally a matter of the heart and its dispositions, those of tender years can indeed love God with all their soul, with their very being. To illustrate, on September 16, 1744, Wesley observed in his journal: "I buried, near the same place, one who had soon finished her course, going to God in the full assurance of faith when she was little more than four years old."⁷² Since the phrase "the full assurance of faith" in Wesley's writings corresponds to Christian perfection, the reference is remarkably clear. Later, in 1764, Wesley took note of the efficaciousness of grace at its highest reaches in the life of a twelve-year-old girl:

I have seldom known so devoted a soul as S— H—, at Macclesfield, who was sanctified within nine days after she was convinced of sin. She was then twelve years old, and I believe was never afterwards heard to speak an improper word, or known to do an improper thing. Her look struck an awe into all that saw her. She is now in Abraham's bosom.⁷³

Moreover, a decade later, in a letter to Miss March, Wesley waxed eloquently on the notion that a great work of grace can take place in a relatively short period of time. "[God] makes young men and women wiser than the aged," Wesley declared, "and gives to many in a very short time a closer and deeper communion with Himself than others attain in a long course of years."⁷⁴

Entire Sanctification Itself: The Second Focus of the Wesleyan Order of Salvation

In several of his writings, John Wesley revealed that he first saw the end or *telos* of religion, which is holiness, when he was a young man. "These are the very words wherein I largely declared, for the first time, my sentiments of Christian perfection," he notes, "And is it not easy to see . . . that this is the very point at which I aimed all along from the year 1725."⁷⁵ Indeed, during this pivotal year, Wesley encountered Bishop Taylor's *Rules and Exercises of Holy Living*, which convinced him of the importance of purity of intention, whereupon he dedicated all his life to God. And the following year, in 1726, the young fellow of Lincoln College read Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, which highlighted "the nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart."⁷⁶ And a few years later, in 1728 or 1729, Wesley perused William Law's *Christian Perfection*, which persuaded him, more than ever, to use his own words, "of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian."⁷⁷ Observe that all of these sources that Wesley claimed informed his understanding of Christian perfection were western; that is, it was the works of two Anglicans and a Roman Catholic that gave him insight to the *nature* of entire sanctification. As Outler remarked, "the taproot of Wesley's theology was sunk into the rich original stratum of the English Reformation."⁷⁸ The Eastern (catholic) Fathers, however, largely informed his view of the *process* of sanctification *leading up to* Christian perfection.⁷⁹ The difference, once again, is important.

In light of this early autobiographical material, which underscores the seriousness of Wesley's spiritual quest, it is not surprising to learn that he preached a sermon specifically on the subject of Christian perfection a few years later at St. Mary's Oxford, a sermon, upon which he later reflected to John Newton in 1765, that "contains all that I now teach concerning salvation from *all sin* and loving God with an *undivided heart*."⁸⁰ To be sure, "The Circumcision of the Heart" marks a significant exemplification of Wesley's understanding of entire sanctification, in that it views this work of grace principally in terms of holy tempers: in particular, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love of course, but also in terms of humility. "Humility, a right judgment of ourselves," Wesley points out, "cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfections."⁸¹ Circumcision, so understood, is a "habitual disposition of soul"⁸²

and entails "being endued with those virtues which were ⁸³ Entire sanctification or Christian perfection describes, in other words, the characteristics of holy love reigning in the human heart, a love that not only embraces the love of God and neighbor, but that also excludes all sin.

What Entire Sanctification Is Not

Perhaps the best window on Wesley's conception of entire sanctification is to be found in his treatise *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, which was produced in 1766. In fact, because this doctrine was apt to be misunderstood by Moravians, Calvinists, and others, Wesley takes great care in this work to state in what sense Christians are not and can never hope to be perfect. On this topic, Wesley affirms many of the statements that he had made earlier in his sermon "Christian Perfection," written in 1741. Believers, for instance, are, first of all, not perfect in knowledge. Freedom from ignorance is not promised to those who utterly embrace the love of God and offer no resistance to divine grace. The pure in heart must continue to study and learn, to develop their minds, in order to avoid enthusiasm or fanaticism, and even then some of the central mysteries of the faith such as the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation, for example, will still escape their clearest thoughts.⁸⁴

Second, for the seasoned Wesley, no state of grace is so lofty that one cannot fall.⁸⁵ "We do not find any general state described in Scripture," he notes, "from which a man cannot draw back to sin."⁸⁶ In fact, in 1766, when Wesley examined fifty erstwhile professors of Christian perfection, he quickly discovered that about two-thirds had suffered loss.⁸⁷ He, therefore, stressed the continual need of the pure in heart to walk closely with Christ and not to take the grace of God for granted. Indeed, he taught that those whose hearts were washed clean by the blood of the Lamb still need Christ in all his offices: as their prophet, priest, and king.⁸⁸ Moreover, in a very graphic way, Wesley portrayed the ongoing dependence of the believer on Christ as a dependence that is analogous to a "branch which, united to the vine, bears fruit; but, severed from it, is dried up and withered."⁸⁹

Beyond this, Wesley reveals in his *Plain Account* that believers still depend on Christ not simply to keep them from the shoals of the reemergence of inbred and actual sin, but also "to atone for their omissions, their shortcomings, (as some not improperly speak,) their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds."⁹⁰ And elsewhere, in one of his letters, Wesley discourses on this same theme: "For as long as they [the entirely sanctified] are in the body," he writes, "they are liable to mistake and to speak or act according to that mistaken judgement,"⁹¹ with the result, of course, that "they cannot abide

the rigour of justice, but still need mercy and forgiveness."⁹² Put another way, Wesley maintains that the entirely sanctified still deviate from "the perfect law," though not willfully, and therefore it is these acts that need an atonement. On this subject, he elaborates:

To explain myself a little farther on this head: (1.) Not only sin, properly so called, (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law,) but sin, improperly so called, (that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown,) needs the atoning blood. (2.) I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality.⁹³

Consequently, *sinless perfection* is a phrase that Wesley never used, lest it be implied that believers are free from *any* violation of the perfect law, voluntary or not. Those who are perfected in love are still subject to ignorance and mistakes, a condition that is inseparable from their finiteness. Therefore "involuntary transgressions" of the law of love are not sins properly speaking, yet they still need the atoning blood of Christ. "Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels," Wesley writes, "but to God alone."⁹⁴

Third, Christians are not so perfect as to be free from infirmities: that is, from "weakness or slowness of understanding, dullness or confusedness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination."⁹⁵ What Wesley probably has in mind here is the interaction between the body and the soul and the resultant confusion of thought that can occur due to the limitations of the body and to the fact that human beings are creatures and not pure spirits. "As long as we dwell in an house of clay," Wesley writes, "it is liable to affect the mind; sometimes by dulling or darkening the understanding, and sometimes more directly by damping and depressing the soul."⁹⁶ More important, perhaps, Wesley maintains that "a thousand infirmities are consistent even with the highest degree of holiness, which is no other than pure love."⁹⁷ Note, then, that an infirmity is not a license to sin, nor can it ever be used as an excuse for such: "Let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is," Wesley warns.⁹⁸ In short, an infirmity is simply an amoral, temporal limitation expressive of human finiteness.

Fourth, perfect love does not eliminate temptation. Nowhere in the Bible is a promise made to believers concerning this. In stead the Scriptures, as Wesley correctly observes, continually exhort all the sons and daughters of God to remain steadfast in the face of manifold temptations. In fact, so concerned was

Wesley with the danger of temptations, commingled with ignorance, to the life of the soul that he crafted a sermon in 1760 on this very topic, entitled "Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations." More specifically, in this piece, Wesley maintained that freedom from trial "belongeth not to this life."⁹⁹ Such a reality, then, calls for both perseverance and courage on the part of believers.

And last, Wesley rejected the idea of a static perfection that would not admit of a continual increase and advance as one improves the rich grace of God. Thus, there is no place in Wesley's theology for the notion that "one has arrived," spiritually speaking. Those whose hearts have been made pure by the blood of Christ must continue to grow in knowledge, grace, and gifts, but they will not grow *into* purity since the heart has *already* been purified. Christian perfection, so understood, is not static but dynamic, and it bespeaks of the richest measures of holy love.

What Entire Sanctification Is: The Third Liberty of the Gospel

When Wesley addresses in his treatise on perfection in what sense Christians are perfect, he immediately points out that he is "not now speaking of babes in Christ, but adult Christians."¹⁰⁰ "But even babes in Christ," he quickly adds, "are so far perfect as not to commit sin."¹⁰¹ Consequently, if one maintains that perfection in love is simply "the power not to sin willfully,"¹⁰² as Outler seems to suggest, it must be noted that this power, according to Wesley, is a grace that marks even the children of God, babes in Christ: " 'Whosoever is born of God' . . . cannot voluntarily transgress any command of God."¹⁰³ More to the point, Christian perfection goes beyond the issue of the power of sin to deal principally with its *being*. In fact, it is nothing short of remarkable that in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* as well as in a crucial sermon on the same subject, Wesley takes such great pains to discuss the privileges of babes in Christ, those initially sanctified by the grace of God. He does this, no doubt, because he realized even in his own eighteenth-century context that many of his readers would mistakenly identify the freedom of the children of God with the entirely sanctified and in this way undervalue *both* regeneration *and* entire sanctification.

So then, Wesley parsed the liberties of the gospel with respect to freedom from the various debilitating effects of sin in the following fashion: "The *guilt* is one thing, the *power* another, and the *being* yet another. That believers are delivered from the *guilt* and *power* of sin we allow; that they are delivered from the *being* of it we deny."¹⁰⁴ That is, freedom from the very *being* of sin, even the carnal nature or original sin, the third liberty of the gospel, is not only the concern of this second evangelical repentance, but also makes up an important part of what is entailed in entire sanctification as the following chart illustrates:

Twofold Repentance Issuing in Three Liberties			
Saving Reality	Justification	Regeneration	Entire Sanctification
Freedom From	Guilt	Power or Dominion	Being
Conviction of	Actual Sin	Actual Sin	Inbred Sin
Type of Repentance	Legal	Legal	Evangelical

What, then, is entire sanctification? Wesley asserts that the graces of mature Christians, those who are "strong in the Lord,"¹⁰⁵ exceed those of babes in Christ in at least two respects: first of all, they are free from evil thoughts. Thus, if the heart is no longer evil, Wesley reasons, then thoughts involving ill will, lust, envy, or the like will no longer be present in the heart. "But it is only of grown Christians it can be affirmed," Wesley states in 1766, that "they are in such a sense perfect, as . . . to be freed from evil thoughts."¹⁰⁶ However, a distinction must be made between evil thoughts, on the one hand, and wandering thoughts, on the other hand. Earlier in 1741, in the preface to a volume of hymns that he and his brother Charles had published, John Wesley "came as close as he ever would to an unnuanced claim for sinless perfection—'freedom from *all* self-will and even "wandering thoughts." ' "¹⁰⁷ However, he later qualified this claim in a few of his writings, more particularly in his sermon "Wandering Thoughts." In this piece, for instance, Wesley distinguishes two classes of thoughts: those that wander from God, and "those that wander from the particular point we have in hand,"¹⁰⁸ the one evil, the other not. Since the first thoughts constitute practical atheism for Wesley, a heart of unbelief, believers can, at least, expect to be free from this.¹⁰⁹ But they can never be released from wandering thoughts in the second sense, from those that stray from the point they have in mind. And these are no more sinful, Wesley notes, "than the motion of the blood in our veins."¹¹⁰

Second, those perfected in love, in whom dwells the mind that was in Christ, are now free from evil tempers. This deliverance, so crucial in many ways, can be expressed both positively and negatively. Negatively speaking, it entails freedom from such unholy tempers as pride, self-will, and love of the world, which earlier had issued in a heart bent toward backsliding. The believer now "feels" no contrary principle within; the heart has been cleansed of inbred sin by the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit; and "he experiences," to use Wesley's own words written in 1766, "a total death to sin."¹¹¹

Positively speaking, entire sanctification not only entails actual renewal, transformation, and purification through the ever-potent grace of God, but also marks a genuine healing of the soul (*therapeia psuches*). "By perfection," Wesley notes, "I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man ruling all the tempers, words, and actions, the whole heart and the whole life."¹¹² Again, "It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul."¹¹³ Notice that the difference between imputation and impartation is evident here, and whenever the leading motif in the discussion is sanctification,

whether initial or entire, it is the theme of impartation (and realization) that characteristically predominates. Christian perfection entails the freedom, now graciously restored, to obey the two great commandments of which Jesus spoke, to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind . . . And a second . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39). "No wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul"; Wesley observes, "and . . . all [our] thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love."[114](#)

Entire sanctification, then, is love replacing sin, holy love conquering every vile passion and temper. It not only includes a "heart and life all devoted to God,"[115](#) but also embraces the purification of the *relation* between God and humanity such that the *imago Dei*, especially the moral image, has been renewed in its glory and splendor. The creature, once steeped in sin, now reflects the goodness of the Creator in a remarkable way. Being properly related to the Most High, believers give evidence of the divine glory that shines through their being. Christian perfection, then, is another term for holy love. It is holy in that believers so marked by this grace are free from the impurities and the drag of sin. It is loving in that believers now love God as the goal of their being, and they love their neighbors as they should. "Blessed be God," Wesley exclaims, ". . . we know there is nothing deeper, there is nothing better in heaven or earth than love! There cannot be, unless there were something higher than the God of love!"[116](#)

The Full Assurance of Faith

Since the chapter on the Holy Spirit has already explored the distinction between the full assurance of faith and that of hope, and since it has also considered the witness of the Spirit with respect to entire sanctification (and the whole question of a specialized vocabulary), all that remains to delineate is the parallel treatment that Wesley offers between the assurance that pertains to justification (and regeneration), on the one hand, and to entire sanctification, on the other hand. Thus, in answering the question, how can believers *know* that they are entirely sanctified, Wesley once again draws a relation between the two foci of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*. Observe the parallel language in the following account: "But how do you know, that you are sanctified, saved from your inbred corruption? . . . I can know it *no otherwise* than I know that I am justified. 'Hereby know we that we are of God' in either sense, 'by the Spirit that he hath given us.' We know it by the witness and by the fruit of the Spirit."¹¹⁷ And in a letter to Peggy Dale in 1767, Wesley exclaims: "The witness of sanctification *as well as* of justification is the privilege of God's children. And you may have the one always clear *as well as* the other if you walk humbly and closely with God."¹¹⁸

The *similarities* implied in the preceding examples occur on two levels. First of all, entire sanctification, like justification, entails a *direct witness*, which means that it is the Holy Spirit who witnesses to believers, indeed assures them, that the gracious work of God has been accomplished in their souls. "None therefore ought to believe that the work is done," Wesley writes, "till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, *as clearly as* his justification."¹¹⁹

As expected, the *differences* between initial and subsequent assurance (due to the spiritual development that has taken place in the interim) occur on two levels as well; that is, in terms of both the direct and the indirect witness. For example, in terms of the *direct witness*, Wesley points out: "As, when we were justified, the Spirit bore witness with our spirit, that our sins were *forgiven*; so, when we were sanctified, he bore ¹²⁰ In a similar fashion, Wesley explores these differences in terms of the transition from a babe in Christ, to a young man, to a father: "A natural man has neither fear nor love; one that is awakened, fear without love; a babe in Christ, love and fear; a father in Christ, love without

fear"¹²¹—distinctions that had numerous examples among the eighteenth-century Methodists.

Second, the *differences* in terms of the *indirect witness* are equally significant. Wesley notes, for example, that the fruit of the Spirit that accompanies entire sanctification is "love, joy, [and] peace, *always* abiding; by *invariable* long suffering, patience, resignation; by gentleness, triumphing over all provocation. . ."¹²² And to the question, "But what great matter is there in this? Have we not all this when we are justified?" Wesley replies, with some measure of astonishment:

What, total resignation to the will of God, without any mixture of self-will? gentleness, without any touch of anger, even the moment we are provoked? love to God, without the least love to the creature, but in and for God, excluding all pride? love to man, excluding all envy, all jealousy, and rash judging? meekness, keeping the whole soul inviolably calm? and temperance in all things? Deny that any ever came up to this, if you please; but do not say, all who are justified do.¹²³

It is the completeness, the thoroughness of the work, then, to which Wesley appeals as well as to the constancy of its fruit—elements that bespeak of the efficacy of God's entirely sanctifying grace. "If any deny the witness of sanctification and occasion disputing in the select society," Wesley warns, "let him or her meet therein no more."¹²⁴

Pastoral Considerations on the Way to Eternity

Though Wesley affirmed throughout his writings that the grace of entire sanctification is available *now* to the children of God to be received by simple faith, he nevertheless pointed out, in a very pastoral fashion, that this gift of grace is not usually received until just prior to death. Indeed, this teaching not only appears in the conference minutes of 1744 and 1747,^{[125](#)} but also is expressed in Wesley's *Plain Account*, produced in 1766. "We grant," Wesley writes in this last piece, " . . . that many of those who have died in the faith, yea, the greater part of those we have known, were not perfected in love till a little before their death."^{[126](#)} And the very next year, Wesley relates to his brother Charles that he believes that the "instant [of entire sanctification] generally is the instant of death, the *moment* before the soul leaves the body."^{[127](#)} Notice in this context, then, that Wesley still insists that Christian perfection is instantaneous, even though for many it will not occur until just prior to their demise.

Since Wesley rejected the possibility of cleansing after death in purgatory, a notion held by Roman Catholics, and since he also repudiated the idea that death itself is a purifier, found among some Lutherans, he, therefore, insisted repeatedly that entire sanctification must take place on this side of eternity. Indeed, in a letter to Elizabeth Hardy in 1758, Wesley writes: "Therefore, whatever degrees of holiness they did or did not attain in the preceding parts of life, neither Jews nor heathens any more than Christians ever did or ever will enter into the New Jerusalem unless they are cleansed from all sin *before* they enter into eternity."^{[128](#)}

If such is the case, then what would happen if a child of God, one who is genuinely justified and born of God, dies before the heart is fully cleansed of inbred sin? Remarkably enough, Wesley entertained just such a speculative question in his own day and responded in both a negative way as well as in a positive one. Negatively speaking, he cautioned Mr. Potter in 1758 not to be insincere in his prayers for present cleansing. The counsel given is worth quoting at length:

Sir, did you ever read Morning Prayer on the tenth day of the month? You then said, "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Did you mean what you said? If you did not, you was guilty of the grossest hypocrisy. If you did, when did you expect God would answer that prayer?

When your body was in the grave? Too late! Unless we have clean hearts before we die, it had been good we had never been born.^{[129](#)}

What is odd about the trenchant, even harsh, nature of Wesley's advice to Mr. Potter is that just a few months earlier, he had written in a far more pastoral way to Elizabeth Hardy and put the whole matter on a positive footing, as is evident in the following:

[Y]et I do not say he is in a state of damnation or under the curse of God till he does attain [entire sanctification]. No, he is in a state of grace and in favor with God as long as he believes. Neither would I say, "If you die without it, you will perish"; but rather, Till you are saved from unholy tempers, you are not ripe for glory. There will, therefore, more promises be fulfilled in your soul before God takes you to Himself.^{[130](#)}

Moreover, in this same letter, Wesley shares his conviction that "none that has faith can die before he is made ripe for glory,"^{[131](#)} a statement that is more in line with what the Methodist Conference had decided earlier in its observation that "none who seeks it [entire sanctification] sincerely shall or can die without it; though possibly he may not attain it, till the very article of death."^{[132](#)}

But why is it, then, that most people will not realize the graces of perfect love until just prior to death, on the threshold of eternity? It may have to do with the specific nature of this grace in which God reigns supremely. However, from the perspective of the believer in whom the carnal nature still remains, the prospect of entire sanctification, that is, the presence of the Holy Spirit reigning in the heart without a rival, may be fraught with fear. Put another way, the self (even one's very identity) may appear to be lost in this flush of purity. But observe that this fear is not the fear of death in the sense of guilt and condemnation, for in commenting on Romans 8:1, Wesley had already pointed out that there is no condemnation for the children of God who are in Christ Jesus, our Lord. It is a different kind of fear that emerges in the shadows of this grace. It is a fear not of condemnation but of annihilation.

Such a spiritual and existential fear, with its attendant struggles, has marked the death throes of some of the greatest saints of the Church. To illustrate, Therese of Lisieux, Roman Catholic saint and nineteenth-century French Carmelite nun, experienced such a trial during her own belabored dying process (of tuberculosis) and exclaimed: "Hope on! Hope on! And look forward to death! But it will give you, not what you hope for, but a still darker night, the night of annihilation."^{[133](#)} And though John Wesley himself had once feared death and the specter of condemnation (remember those powerful Atlantic storms on the way

to Georgia!), nevertheless, by the time he was elderly (and even earlier), this fear was gone. However, in 1766, in a letter to his brother Charles, Wesley reveals a different kind of concern and that his own struggle was similar to that of the later Therese: "I have no more fear than love. Or if I have [any fear, it is not that of falling] into hell but of falling into nothing."¹³⁴

Entire sanctification, then, may not often occur until just prior to death, not because the children of God fail to comprehend what is implied in this highest measure of grace, but precisely because they do. Simply put, to the carnal nature (so often mistakenly identified with the essence of "the self ") that yet remains even in the regenerated soul, perfect love may look like annihilation and nothingness—and *in a sense* it is, for God is now all in all, reigning in the heart without a rival. And though on one level Wesley rejected the dark night of the soul as an error of mysticism, he nevertheless kept backing into its logic.¹³⁵ Fear and the specter of nothingness, rightly understood, bar the way. But perfect love in the end will triumph, and as Scripture points out, it will cast out all fear. That is, the light of divine holy love will shine in the midst of such darkness, in the face of the death of the carnal nature, or to use the language of Thomas Merton,¹³⁶ in the abandonment of the false self to the utter glory and adoration of God.

Today and Tomorrow: Rethinking the Wesleyan *Ordo Salutis*?

In light of the preceding discussions, it should be evident by now that there is a parallel structure implied in Wesley's reasoned thinking about the *ordo salutis* in terms of the two foci of justification (and regeneration), on the one hand, and entire sanctification, on the other hand.

The Order Repudiated

Some scholars, however, have denied that there really is an order, a frame - work, in Wesley's soteriology. This denial has often taken the form of a shift away from Outler's language of *ordo salutis* to the language of *via salutis*, with the goal of underscoring that salvation, for Wesley, was ever a process and not "a standard set of abrupt transitions in status."¹³⁷ But is it accurate to imply that Outler's use of the phrase *ordo salutis*—he was the principal champion of this language—really indicates that salvation is a set of abrupt transitions? Actually, the terminology of *ordo salutis* goes back to seventeenth-century Lutherans and Pietists who wanted to give theological expression to "how God works in the process of salvation from sin,"¹³⁸ which included a number of steps along the way such as "vocation, illumination, conversion, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and renovation."¹³⁹

Moreover, the claim that "human salvation—viewed in Wesley's terms—would be fundamentally *gradual* in process,"¹⁴⁰ unnecessarily privileges a gradualistic reading of Wesley's practical theology at the outset. It is to read Wesley predominantly, if not exclusively, out of the catholic paradigm. For one thing, it fails to recognize that for Wesley, neither the soteriological event of justification nor entire sanctification was ever *realized* as a process, especially when the tension of possibility/actuality informed the temporal dimensions. Rather, Wesley repeatedly stated in his writings, in a conjunctive way, that process *leads up to* these crucial realizations of grace—realizations that, soteriologically speaking, are ever instantaneous (though there may be psychological diversity). Recall Wesley's images of *birth* in terms of the first work of grace and *death* in terms of the second—images that give proper place

and balance to *both* process *and* instantaneousness. In light of this line of reasoning, the claim that "human salvation would be fundamentally gradual in process" must now be judged necessarily to exclude at the outset (or at least to diminish) such crucial, non-processive elements as justification and entire sanctification, the very foci of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*! which is the result of the actualization of grace, ever takes a certain form. In a real sense, believers become different people at different points in their spiritual journey. Convincing grace, for example, leads to conviction; regenerating grace results in the new birth; entirely sanctifying grace issues in entire sanctification, and so on, the one state of grace not to be confused with the other. In fact, Wesley expressed this modification of *being* in terms of the distinction between the natural, legal, and evangelical states not in a static way, of course, but in a way that revealed that the grace of God not only has real consequence, but also takes a definite form in the life of the believer. And it is precisely an order of salvation that takes account of that form.

A second criticism of the phrase *ordo salutis* offered by recent scholarship deems it, oddly enough, to be a throwback to scholastic reasoning. Maddox, the chief source of this view, elaborates:

These projects [which use the terminology of *ordo salutis*] have worked some vigorous critiques recently, which argue that they are misreading Wesley's situation-related pastoral distinctions as technical scholastic distinctions. There is much truth to this charge. While Wesley did argue for several fairly specific distinctions regarding human salvation; most of his considerations of these issues were sparked by, and sought to address, the pastoral needs of his revival movement, not the expectations of scholastic method. Talk of a Wesleyan *ordo salutis* connotes the contrary.^{[141](#)}

Upon closer examination, however, we find that there are several problems with this argument. First of all, to suggest that the distinctions that do emerge in Wesley's doctrine of salvation have their source in the *experience* of those to whom Wesley ministered, apart from normative considerations, simply gives undue weight to experience and in a fashion that belies the basic orientation of Wesley's theological method. Nor is it any more accurate to conclude that the *only* way an order of salvation can emerge is out of "the expectations of scholastic method." To be sure, a different view, and from our perspective one that is much more expressive of Wesley's basic theological posture, sees the *formal* elements of Wesley's doctrine of salvation—that is, the particular shape that soteriological doctrines take—arising out of the normative use of Scripture,

the insights culled from Christian tradition, and a judicious employment of reason as these elements are brought to bear on diverse pastoral situations. This means, then, that the order evident in Wesley's doctrine of salvation emerges not prior to the pastoral setting, from the dictates of an incipient scholasticism, but as a *result* of the application of normative theological elements (Scripture, especially the moral law, reason, and tradition) to the pastoral setting itself.

In light of these several criticisms of an order of salvation, there needs to be a frank admission among Methodists, both scholar and layperson alike, that Wesley's thinking about the process of redemption was not only a human construct, a human creation—a product, if you will, with a definite form—but also quite methodical. Indeed, given Wesley's intellectual proclivities—his preference for logic, order, and coherence—it is hardly surprising to learn that his own best thinking about salvation took a particular shape, that the flow of redemption was not considered to be an indefinite thing, ever subject to the vagaries of time and circumstance, but that it was marked by a certain form, shaped by recurring normative elements, and distinguished by particular characteristics or traits (which we have called soteriological fingerprints) that set it apart from other conceptions such as that of Luther, Calvin, and others. Consequently, the reluctance to acknowledge an order in Wesley's soteriology belies the Methodist leader's own best thinking about the process of redemption. For example, not only did Wesley, in a very pastoral fashion, arrange his hymns in a way that suggests an order of salvation, with different levels of the realization of the grace of God, not only did he structure the Methodist societies (class meeting, bands, select societies) in a similar way, but also he produced a summary sermon, as Outler calls it, that not only takes account of the process of redemption, but also evidences a distinctly Wesleyan order of salvation.¹⁴²

Beyond this, the virtual neglect of the structure of Wesley's soteriology, which is typical of *some* views that repudiate the language of *ordo salutis*, is itself beset with several difficulties. To illustrate, in this view, not only do all soteriological distinctions quickly become one of *degree*, with the result, for example, that the qualitative distinctions that Wesley does indeed make between prevenient and initially sanctifying grace are minimized, if not repudiated, but such a view also fails to take into account, in a significant way, the real change that occurs as the hearts of believers, with their various tempers and affections, are transformed by the grace of God. In other words, the transformation of *being*, which is the result of the actualization of grace, ever takes a certain form. In a real sense, believers become different people at different points in their spiritual

journey. Convincing grace, for example, leads to conviction; regenerating grace results in the new birth; entirely sanctifying grace issues in entire sanctification, and so on, the one state of grace not to be confused with the other. In fact, Wesley expressed this modification of *being* in terms of the distinction between the natural, legal, and evangelical states not in a static way, of course, but in a way that revealed that the grace of God not only has real consequence, but also takes a definite form in the life of the believer. And it is precisely an order of salvation that takes account of that form.

Moreover, just as the *ordo salutis* is capable of high lighting process as it recognizes various actualizations of grace in the midst of structure, so, too, the language of *via salutis* must become capable of underscoring structure in the midst of ongoing process. That is, the terminology of *via salutis*, like the *ordo salutis*, actually contains an order, an explicit structure, especially as it is displayed in the key sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation."¹⁴³ In fact, few can read this piece without immediately recognizing something of the order elucidated therein. Each terminology, then (depending on the preferences of interpreters), must invite us to recognize the conjunctive nature of the Wesleyan journey of salvation in which process and instantaneousness both play roles, in which both catholic and protestant elements are displayed.

The Order Affirmed

In our judgment, then, the Wesleyan order of salvation is not some amorphous process, marked by barely distinguishable increments of grace; instead, it highlights several significant points along the way, qualitatively distinct realizations of grace, some of which are—and remain for Wesley—instantaneous. The model we propose, then, in the wake of these considerations, tracks the development of sinners as they move from prevenient, to convincing (legal repentance), to justifying, to regenerating, to assuring (initial), to convincing (evangelical repentance), to entirely sanctifying, and ultimately to assuring (full) grace. Furthermore, this journey has two distinct foci: the elements that pertain to justification, and those that pertain to entire sanctification. Thus, convincing grace (legal repentance), regeneration, and assurance(initial) are intimately associated with justification. In a similar fashion, convincing grace (evangelical repentance) and assurance (full) are linked with entire sanctification as the following chart demonstrates:

Justification	Entire Sanctification
The Law	The Law
Similarity → Accusation	Accusation
Difference → Actual Sin	Inbred Sin
Repentance	Repentance
Similarity → Self Knowledge	Self-Knowledge
Difference → Legal Repentance	Evangelical Repentance
Works Meet for Repentance	Works Meet for Repentance
Similarity → Conditionally Necessary	Conditionally Necessary
Difference → Not Good (Strictly Speaking)	Good (Initially Sanctifying Grace)
Faith	Faith
Similarity → Unconditionally	Unconditionally Necessary (Exactly As)
Difference → A sure Trust that That "Christ Died for my Sins"	A Sure Trust that Christ Is "Able to Save from All the Sin which Which Remains"
Temporal Dimensions	Temporal Dimensions
Similarity → Gradual/Instantaneous	Gradual/Instantaneous
Difference → Image of Birth	Image of Death
The Witness of the Spirit	The Witness of the Spirit
Similarity → Direct Witness	Direct Witness (Clearly As)
Difference → Sins Forgiven	Sin "Taken Away"

And finally, we must point out that the order outlined above is amply substantiated by Wesley's careful choice of language and rhetoric found in his numerous writings. Simply put, the Wesleyan order of salvation is expressed not only in several sermons, but also in Wesley's letters, theological treatises, and journal entries. It is a basic framework, articulated and modified over the years, that not only provided John Wesley and the people called Methodists with opportunities for self-reflection and guidance, but it also suggested a wonderful and uncanny sense of what was to come as they grew from grace to grace in community and at the hands of a God of holy love.

ChapTer N i n e

Eschatology And Glorification: The Triumph of Holy Love

*Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

—Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, *The Works of John Wesley. A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), Hymn #374, 7:547.

Situated on the cusp of time and eternity, entire sanctification prepares believers for service not only in this world, but also for the world to come. And as his own demise approached, Wesley remarked that the one sole end of humanity was not to be fixed on any temporal, fleeting thing, but to prepare for eternity: "For this alone we live: for this, and no other purpose, is our life either given or continued."¹ More to the point, human beings were not created by a God of holy love to please their senses, "to gratify [their] imagination, to gain money or the praise of men; [or] to seek happiness in any created good, in anything under the sun."² All this, Wesley adds, "is 'walking in a vain shadow'; it is leading a restless, miserable life, in order to a miserable eternity."³ But the inculcation of holy love, the purity of heart and transformation of being that arises in Christian perfection, the restoration of the *imago Dei* in its fullness and splendor, the perfect love that casts out all fear, all of this is suitable preparation to inherit what flesh and blood cannot, even the kingdom of God.

And yet continuity does indeed exist between this life and the world to come

in that Wesley declared not only that the "*eternal world*, commences at death,"⁴ but also that "eternal life then commences when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts"⁵ at the new birth. In a real sense, then, the entire Wesleyan order of salvation, with its two foci, marks a distinct, Spirit-infused path of preparation in order to see God face to face. In the presence of such a radiant and unsurpassed glory, believers so prepared will not look away in shame but will ascend and embrace the very fullness of their salvation.

In light of these observations, Outler was surely correct when he noted that soteriology and eschatology were intimately connected in Wesley's thought, that "soteriology and eschatology were actually two sides of the same mystery of God's proffered grace to man."⁶ The enjoyment of eternal life as believers are renewed in grace for a qualitatively distinct kind of life, not only has value now, but also in the world to come. Indeed, the *ordo salutis* does not end abruptly at entire sanctification nor in satisfying the temporal needs of sinners; instead it is the bridge, the way, that will transport the redeemed to eternity.

Revivalism and Millennialism

Yet another way in which Wesley believed soteriology and eschatology were connected was in terms of the relation between the great evangelical revival in the eighteenth century and the coming millennial reign. And though Luther had thought that the length of a revival of religion would only last around thirty years, Wesley noted that the awakening in the British Isles during his own day had already continued above fifty years.⁷ For one thing, Wesley simply could not believe that God had "wrought so glorious a work to let it sink and die away in a few years."⁸ Indeed, he reckoned that the evangelical revival was "only the beginning of a far greater work—the dawn of 'the latter day glory.'"⁹ Interestingly enough, the spread of genuine, scriptural Christianity would "not 'come with observation',"¹⁰ Wesley writes, but silently by increasing from heart to heart, from house to house, town to town, from one kingdom to another until it embraced both Protestants and Catholics, rich and poor, wise and unlearned.¹¹ What had prevented this spread in the past was what Wesley called "the grand stumbling-block,"¹² namely the lives of nominal Christians. However, once this chief obstacle was removed, then Muslims themselves would look upon Christians with "other eyes, and begin to give attention to their words."¹³

So extensive will this spread of vital Christianity be, energized by the power of the Holy Spirit, that it "will include all the inhabitants of the earth."¹⁴ On this point Wesley elaborates: "Now in the same manner as God *has* converted so many to himself without destroying their liberty, he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world. And it is as easy to him to convert a world as one individual soul."¹⁵ This last claim has led some to speculate that perhaps an implicit universalism is present here. However, such a future flourishing, even if it embraces the whole world at the time, does not undo the reality of past loss, of those who have already died apart from Christ. In other words, the statement "If God can at some time in the future convert the entire world . . . then it seems to follow that He can likewise convert all persons who have ever lived"¹⁶ claims far too much. It not only confuses past fixed realities with the possibilities entailed in the future, but also requires an action not even possible for the Most High, namely, to change the past (and against the dying will of those who formed it).

However, if the phrase God "can likewise convert all persons who have ever lived" does not entail changing past realities at all but refers instead to what

possibilities of grace were then in place while people existed, then a different problem arises: "Due to circumstances or conditions outside their control, they do not have as good an opportunity for salvation as those persons in the future generation who will experience optimal conditions for salvation."¹⁷ But since Wesley realized the graces that some receive are different from those of others (and remember that he held that children will be born *into* the peaceful kingdom of the millennial reign of Christ on the earth) means that we must not immediately conclude either a universalism is operative here or else God is unjust. In our judgment, this is a false dilemma that ignores other important, very viable possibilities. That is, in each instance, in the past as in a future reign, the children of Adam and Eve, at any step along the way of salvation history, are given *sufficient*, even if differing, grace for their needs. Simply put, that some have more does not mean that all do not have enough.

At any rate, Wesley affirmed the reality of a millennial reign, though his thought obviously developed over time. Early on he would have been familiar with the amillennialism (no literal millennial reign of Christ with a focus on the activity of the church) that hailed from the Anglican Reformation.¹⁸ And though Wesley was likely influenced by the premillennialism (the coming of Christ establishes the millennial reign) of Thomas Hartley,¹⁹ in the end, his views can best be described as postmillennial even though, following Bengel, he postulated two distinct thousand-year periods: "During the former, the promises concerning the flourishing state of the church, Revelation 10:7, shall be fulfilled; during the latter, while the saints reign with Christ in heaven, men on earth will be careless and secure."²⁰

So then, by connecting the great evangelical revival with the approaching (first) millennial reign, especially in some late sermons, Wesley maintained not only that this reign would be progressive, even incremental, but also that it would occur before the second coming of Christ. So understood, the millennium will evidence co-operant grace as that reign increases from heart to heart, city to city, and nation to nation. However, the establishment of the new creation itself, and the coming of the new Jerusalem associated with it, a point that will be developed below, will represent not a synergism of divine and human working, but the activity of God alone as an utter gift lavished upon the saints. In other words, even in the highest reaches of Wesley's eschatology, his conjunctive understanding of grace is ever present.

Eschatology and the Reign of God

Though only a select number of saints who have ever lived will take part in establishing the millennial reign upon the earth, all people, both saint and sinner alike, will experience the eschatological events associated with death, the intermediate state and the coming judgment, events that will occur prior to the establishment of the new creation and the final triumph of holy love.

Death

Though the life and thought of John Wesley obviously pre dates the existentialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there are nevertheless some similarities to be noted here, especially in terms of the cruciality of death. For instance, like some of the existentialists, Kierkegaard in particular, Wesley views the dying process and the *moment* of death as a crisis, the value of which can be determined, at least in part, when such an eventuality results in a serious reflection on the limitations of mundane existence. Indeed, for Wesley, death is a real end, a finite limit, which not only eliminates our temporal existence, but also challenges its very manner as well. Simply put, death means that time has literally run out, that the *process* of transformation toward purity is *now* at an end. And though death itself will not purify the soul, as Wesley once had mistakenly thought,²¹ it will, when viewed soteriologically, call into account the various aims and activities of our lives.²² "The thought of present death sets all our faculties in alarm,"²³ Wesley writes. It can function, then, as a goad to a more serious and holy life. Indeed, having read Jeremy Taylor's *Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Holy Dying*, Wesley viewed the death of the saints (precious in the sight of God) as a witness to those who remain of the goodness and graciousness of God. "The last scene of life in dying believers is of great use to those who are about them," Wesley observes; "Here we see the reality of religion and of things eternal; and nothing has a greater tendency to solemnize the soul and make and keep it dead to all below."²⁴

The cruciality of death, however, is diminished somewhat by Wesley's claim that death, properly understood, entails the separation of the soul from the body with the result that the soul does not—indeed cannot—die.²⁵ "Their bodies . . . are 'crushed before the moth,'" Wesley notes, "but their souls will never die."²⁶ And again, "When the soul springs out of time into eternity," Wesley writes, "what an amazing change! What are all the pleasures, the business of this world, to a disembodied spirit."²⁷ In fact, the immortality of the soul, as noted in chapter 2, is so affirmed by Wesley that there is a real sense in which human beings do not die, since the essence of who they are as people, their souls in other words, continue on in the world to come. Drawing on the distinction that Descartes made between the *res extensa* (extended thing) and the *res cogitans* (thinking thing), Wesley states in his sermon "What Is Man?" produced in 1788:

I? But what am *I*? Unquestionably I am something distinct from my body. It seems evident that my body is not necessarily included therein. For when my body dies I shall not die. I shall exist as really as I did before. And I cannot but believe this self-moving, thinking principle, with all its passions and affections, will continue to exist although the body be mouldered into dust.^{[28](#)}

And again, in his sermon "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," produced the same year, Wesley maintains that "we cannot think death puts a period to our being. The body indeed returns to dust: but the soul, being of a nobler nature, is not affected thereby."^{[29](#)} Duration without end, therefore, "is not an incommunicable attribute of the great Creator," Wesley maintains, "but he has been graciously pleased to make innumerable multitudes of his creatures partakers of it."^{[30](#)}

The Intermediate State

At death, the immortal soul enters Hades, the receptacle of separate spirits,³¹ a place or state of being that must not be confused with hell, Wesley argues, since it is the abode of *all* separated spirits, both the just and the unjust. In his sermon "On Faith," written just a little over two years before his death, Wesley points out the confusion of the words "Hades" and "hell" that has occurred in the works of "our English translators"³² has led to all sorts of theological difficulties. Thus, for example, when the Latin phrase *descendit ad inferos* of the Athanasian Creed was translated into English, it appeared as "descended into hell."³³ However, since this English phrase could suggest what was for Wesley a very impious notion, namely, that at death Christ proceeded to a place of torment, he insisted on a distinction between the words "Hades" and "hell." The former was a general term and simply referred to the abode of separate spirits,³⁴ while the latter included only the damned. Not surprisingly, Deschner observes that Wesley omitted any reference to Christ descending into hell in the Methodist Twenty-five Articles.³⁵ And in his commentary on Acts 2:27, an important passage on this topic, Wesley emphatically states: "But it does not appear, that ever our Lord went into hell."³⁶

Properly understood, then, Hades is both the antechamber of hell and of heaven. Concerning the former, Wesley indicates that as soon as the lost die, they are conducted to this place of torment by "the devil and his angels,"³⁷ though he suggests a possible role for wicked human spirits in this affair as well.³⁸ At any rate, this "unhappy division of Hades" is not "the nethermost hell,"³⁹ a fate that is reserved for the future judgment. Nevertheless, it is a state beyond all hope of redemption; it is, in short, a God-forsaken condition. That is, those who are tormented in the antechamber of hell are not thereby purified, but instead remain infected with the dogs of hell: pride, avarice, lust, hatred, and blasphemy. The concept of purgatory, therefore, is put aside as an erroneous teaching that can only detract from the excellency and sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross. "No suffering but that of Christ has any power to expiate sin" Wesley reasons; "and no fire but that of love can purify the soul, either in time or in eternity."⁴⁰ And again, "But we believe," Wesley notes, "(as did the ancient Church) that none suffer after death but those who suffer eternally."⁴¹

Just as the souls of the lost do not immediately descend to the nethermost

hell, so the souls of the righteous do not instantly enter heaven. They, too, enter Hades, the realm of the dead, but with two important differences: first, they are separated from the wicked who can no longer harm or persecute them; second, they are free from all pain and torment.⁴² And Wesley most often refers to this antechamber of heaven as "paradise," a term used by the ancient Jews as well. It is the place to which the penitent thief went at his death, where good souls go to await the coming judgment, and into which Christ descended. And though Wesley does not offer a corresponding term for the antechamber of hell, others have suggested the traditional designation of "Tartarus."⁴³ The distinctions of the intermediate state can now be summarized in the following chart:

	Hades	Hades	Hades	Hades
Antechamber of Heaven (Temporary)	Paradise			
Antechamber of Hell (Temporary)		Tartarus?		
Eternal Condition of the Redeemed			Saints in Glory (Matthew 25:34-40)	
Eternal Condition of the Lost				The "Accursed Ones" in Torment (Matthew 25:41-46)

While the entirely sanctified are in paradise, they will be increasing in grace and knowledge. They will, for instance, comprehend both the nature and the works of God (creation and redemption) in a far greater fashion. "We shall learn more concerning these," Wesley observes, "in an hour, than we could in an age, during our stay in the body."⁴⁴ In fact, Wesley imagines an idyllic picture, whereby the saints will be "conversing with all the wise and holy souls that lived in all ages and nations from the beginning of the world," with angels resplendent in beauty, and even with "the eternal Son of God"⁴⁵ himself. With this increase in knowledge and wisdom will also come an advance in happiness and holiness, whereby the saints will be "continually ripening for heaven."⁴⁶

Resurrection and Judgment

Wesley, of course, was well aware that the Roman Catholic Church had made a distinction between a particular judgment that occurs immediately at death and a general judgment that takes place at the consummation of all things. However, after careful consideration, Wesley rejected this teaching largely because he could not find sufficient warrant for two separate judgments in Scripture.⁴⁷ For Wesley, "the moment a soul drops the body, and stands naked before God, it cannot but know what its portion will be to all eternity."⁴⁸ For one thing, its separate place in Hades will be indicative of its eternal state; nevertheless, such knowledge does not constitute a judgment *per se* but is simply an awareness of the awesome and unchangeable verdict that is yet to come.

The circumstances that will precede the standing of humanity before the judgment seat of Christ include, among other things, foreboding signs upon the earth.⁴⁹ "There shall be earthquakes . . . 'in all places' . . . 'the sea and waves' [will roar], 'the powers of heaven also shall be shaken,' " Wesley notes, "and then shall be heard the universal 'shout' . . . followed by 'the voice of the archangel' proclaiming the approach of the Son of God and man."⁵⁰ At this point the resurrection will occur, the dead will rise; the Son of God will have angels gather his elect; and he will then sit upon the throne of his glory and separate the sheep from the goats.⁵¹ This cataclysmic event is often referred to as "the day of the Lord."⁵² Simply put, the day of humanity, and all that it has strived for and done, is now at an end. The day of the Lord, in which righteousness, justice, and holiness reign supreme, has finally arrived.

Wesley speculates that the great white throne of judgment will be "high exalted above the earth."⁵³ The persons to be judged will include all those "that have sprung from the loins of Adam since the world began."⁵⁴ And they will be judged, interestingly enough, according to their works, what they have done or left undone in this life. Thus, not only will all the actions of every person then be brought to a full open view, but also "all their words, seeing 'every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' "⁵⁵ Beyond this, "every inward working of every human soul: every appetite, passion, inclination, [and] affection"⁵⁶ will be displayed so that it will then be readily evident who are righteous and who are not. Judgment, therefore, is both revelatory and thorough.

Since Wesley so identified the moral law with many of the attributes that characterize Jesus Christ, a point developed in an earlier chapter, it is not surprising to find out that the moral law itself plays a distinct role in the coming judgment as well. Indeed, Wesley was critical of those gospel preachers who wanted to be done with law in the name of grace and who, therefore, saw no role for it at the throne of God. Pointing out that these antinomians have become "a judge of that which God hath ordained to judge thee,"⁵⁷ Wesley then offered a word of rebuke: "So thou hast set up thyself in the judgment seat of Christ, and cast down the rule whereby he will judge the world."⁵⁸ Law and grace, then, is not only a well-developed theme of Wesley's practical theology, emblematic of the orienting concern of holiness (holy love) and grace, but also one that characterizes both this world and the world to come.

Final Justification

In light of the preceding observations, it must be asked, how did Wesley reconcile the notions of justification by faith alone and a judgment according to works? In his sermon "On the Wedding Garment," produced in 1790, he explains that these two ideas are not contradictory so long as one bears in mind that the former pertains to initial justification; the latter to final justification. Again, the one refers to present salvation in which faith is the only condition absolutely required for *entering* upon a new life; the other refers to final salvation in which works are also in some sense necessary,⁵⁹ simply because there will undoubtedly be ample opportunity for their occurrence and thus for the demonstration of a lively, not a dead, faith. Wesley reasons:

The righteousness of Christ is, doubtless, necessary for any soul that enters into glory. But so is personal holiness, too, for every child of man. But it is highly needful to be observed that they are necessary in different respects. The former is necessary to *entitle* us to heaven; the latter, to *qualify* us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we could have no *claim* to glory; without holiness we could have no *fitness* for it.⁶⁰

Early in his career, in 1741, Wesley had taken issue with Bishop Bull's *Harmonia Apostolica* and its teaching of a second or final justification. However, by the 1740s (and Lindström argues for an even earlier date⁶¹), Wesley came to appreciate the importance of just such a teaching. To illustrate, in 1745, Wesley wrote to Thomas Church and not only affirmed the notion of a second justification ("But entire sanctification goes before our justification at the last day"⁶²), but also insisted that "both inward and outward holiness are the stated conditions of final justification."⁶³ The next year, in exploring the meaning of Romans 2:13 ("For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified"), Wesley observed in his sermon "Justification by Faith" that the apostle Paul "appears to refer our justification to the sentence of the great day."⁶⁴ Beyond this evidence, by the 1770s, Wesley not only increased his emphasis on second justification, perhaps because it was linked to his favored theme of holiness, but also began to look more kindly on the work of Bishop Bull himself, the previous object of his censure.⁶⁵ In fact, late in his ministry, Wesley now referred to this Anglican divine as "that great light of the Christian Church."⁶⁶ Such a renewed

appreciation for the bishop probably grew out of Wesley's increasing concern during this decade especially as he encountered the supposed Calvinist antinomianism of Walter Shirley, Rowland Hill, and others.^{[67](#)}

The Question of Merit

To be sure, several Calvinists drew some erroneous conclusions about Wesley's doctrine of salvation in general and final justification in particular because they failed to comprehend just what he meant by the term "merit." Part of the problem here, no doubt, was a lack of clarity on Wesley's part. For example, in the Conference Minutes of 1770, against which Walter Shirley, the Countess of Huntingdon, and others fulminated, Wesley defined "merit" along the following lines:

As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded according to our works, yea because of our works. How does this differ from, "for the sake of our works?" And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*? which is no more than, "as our works deserve."⁶⁸

The phrase "to be rewarded as our works deserve," in the absence of any other distinctions, could easily be interpreted by Wesley's critics as an echo of Trent. This sixteenth-century council, for example, expressed the following judgment on the matter:

If anyone saith, that the good works of one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified; or that the said justified . . . does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life . . . let him be anathema.⁶⁹

But Wesley employed the term "merit" in a way very different from that of Rome, that is, in terms of both a "strict" (or "proper") and a "loose" sense. Concerning the former usage, Wesley writes in a letter to his brother Charles in 1771, "I have declared a thousand times there is no goodness in man till he is justified; no merit either before or after."⁷⁰ Elsewhere in his "Remarks on Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled," written in 1773, Wesley declares: "And yet I still maintain . . . there is no merit, taking the word strictly, but in the blood of Christ; that salvation is not by the merit of works; and that there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can, strictly speaking, deserve the least thing at God's hand."⁷¹ And Wesley adds, underscoring his essential point: "Take the word merit in a strict sense, and I utterly renounce it."⁷² His use of the term, then, in the Conference Minutes of 1770 does not refer to this "strict" usage— a point that was, unfortunately, missed by Wesley's critics. "None of us talk of being accepted for our works," Wesley exclaims, "that is the Calvinist slander."⁷³

However, when Wesley described merit in a "loose sense" in a letter, for example, to his brother Charles, he meant little more than that our works are in some sense "rewardable."⁷⁴ This element of reward, however, does not mean that the redeemed have an independent claim on the grace of God. Instead, it simply points to the already-effective grace of the Almighty that results in works that will, again out of sheer grace, be favored and rewarded. In other words, God is so gracious that not only does divine empowering grace issue in the fruit of the Christian life, but also God will reward believers precisely for this fruit—fruit that they could never have brought about by them selves! Wesley's understanding of merit in the loose sense, then, does not underscore autonomous human achievement. On the contrary, it doubly highlights the graciousness of divine activity: once in the giving of grace; the other in the rewarding of its fruit. Sanctification, then, though not the basis of (initial) justification, is the basis of final justification, not because works form an independent basis for a claim on the goodness of God, but because such works are the evidences of a lively and gracious faith. "As our Church inculcates justification by faith alone," (Protestant emphasis) Wesley affirms, "she nevertheless supposes . . . universal holiness to be previous to final justification" (Catholic emphasis).⁷⁵ Or as Lindström put it, "The Christian who has already been saved through faith, still awaits the final salvation for which the maturing power of sanctification will qualify him."⁷⁶ Again, for Wesley, the meritorious cause for both initial and final justification is not works, no matter how noble or numerous they may be, but the atonement effectuated by Jesus Christ.

The New Creation

A significant portion of Wesley's writing on the new creation concerns not so much this present dispensation, and the church militant, but the era that will emerge shortly after God's judgment of the earth, the period of the church triumphant. Indeed, the judgment of the Most High will *disrupt* the created order, destroying the continuity from one age to the next. "We look for new heavens and a new earth," Wesley remarks, "raised as it were out of the ashes of the old."⁷⁷ That is, after the judgment, the heavens will pass away and the earth and all its sinful works will be burnt up to prepare for the new creation as promised in the book of Revelation. However, even in Wesley's time, there were many scoffers who doubted such a judgment and how the entire earth could be consumed in such a fashion. By way of response, Wesley speculated that perhaps a comet, or the "lightnings which give 'shine to the world,' "⁷⁸ or even lava from Aetna, Hecla, or Vesuvius would bring about this momentous flaming end.⁷⁹ At any rate, though Wesley was not certain of the specific manner of this momentous event, he was certain of its eventual occurrence.

Judging from the amount of material on these topics, it appears, however, that Wesley was much more interested in the creation of the new than in the destruction of the old. In his sermon "The New Creation," for example, he reveals, first of all, how both the starry and the lower heavens will be created anew, such that there will no longer be any blazing stars or comets in the former, nor hurricanes or terrifying meteors in the latter.⁸⁰ Moreover, the elements that make up the natural world will all be transformed with benign results. Fire, for instance, will lose its capacity to destroy, though not its "vivifying power."⁸¹ The air, in turn, will be unable to support storms and tempests, and the water of the earth, the one-time instrument of God's wrath, will keep its bounds and will no longer issue in floods. In fact, the earth itself will be renewed so that there will be neither earthquakes nor burning mountains that destroy, nor thorns, nor briars, nor thistles which frustrate the fruit of the land, nor will any creature "hurt or give pain to any other."⁸² But the most glorious of all changes relates not to the elements nor to any inanimate thing, but to the children of God. Wesley elaborates:

'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former

things are done away.' As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto; as there will be no more grieving for or parting with friends; so there will be no more sorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin.⁸³

The meek shall at this very special time inherit the kingdom that has been prepared for them before the foundation of the earth. "They shall have all things really necessary for life and godliness,"⁸⁴ Wesley observes. There will be no lack. Moreover, the sons and daughters of God "shall enjoy whatever portion God hath given them here, and shall hereafter possess the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."⁸⁵ Conformed to God's image in a superlative, translucent way, they shall radiate the divine glory throughout.

In a real sense, then, Wesley's doctrine of the new creation, of a newly fashioned physical world in which the righteous dwell, spills into the question of theodicy. In other words, the whole problem of natural evil in the form of floods, earthquakes, and so on, receives a definite answer only in the coming new creation. Here natural evil will finally be a thing of the past, as will sorrow, pain, and death. Thus, grace will triumph where sin once ruled; life will be victorious where death once held sway. The redeemed "shall 'hear a great voice out of heaven,' " Wesley writes, "saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them."⁸⁶ And he adds, under scoring his point: "Hence will arise an unmixed state of holiness and happiness far superior to that which Adam enjoyed in paradise."⁸⁷ Such a state of blessedness and glory, remarkable in many respects, is grounded in nothing less than the divine trinitarian love: "And to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!"⁸⁸

But there are good and rewarding things in store not only for humanity, but also for the animal realm as well as the new creation holds consequences for the entire created order. Admittedly, what Wesley argues here is somewhat speculative, but it nevertheless deserves consideration since it gives the reader many significant clues concerning the basic contours of his theological posture. For example, at one point Wesley asks: "But will *the creature*, will even the brute creation, always remain in this deplorable condition?" To which he emphatically replies: "God forbid that we should affirm this!"⁸⁹ On the contrary, the animals as well will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, from

irregular appetites and passions, into glorious liberty, "even a measure, according as they are capable, of 'the liberty of the children of God.'" ⁹⁰ And though in his sermon "The General Deliverance," Wesley denies that God has equal regard for beasts as he does for humanity, he nevertheless conjectures along the following lines: "What if it should please him, when he makes us 'equal to angels', to make them what we are now? Creatures capable of God? Capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying the Author of their being?" ⁹¹

Viewed from another perspective, the implications of this last teaching are of great import. Since according to Wesley the knowledge and love of God are both the privilege and distinguishing characteristic of humanity, what then of those who neglect this glorious favor? Some theologies may suggest that those who choose to live in this fashion will eventually descend to the level of beasts; however, Wesley suggests something even more frightful—that evil men and women, those who stubbornly refuse to love and serve God, will sink even below the level of animals, since the animal kingdom itself will no longer be at so low a rank, but will be invited to enjoy what sinful humanity has willfully ⁹² How poignant, then, how troubling will the loss of the condemned be! How horrible the realization that all of creation has passed them by to serve a rich and loving God. "Let all who are of a more generous spirit know and maintain their rank in the scale of beings," Wesley admonishes; "Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity—the knowledge and love of God." ⁹³

In the new creation, then, that embraces a newly fashioned created order as well as the transformation of the animal and human realms, the holy love of God reigns supreme. What humanity could not bring about by itself through its own efforts, a God of holy love has graciously provided as a gift. Having surrendered to the divine leading, the sons and daughters of God receive the love of the Most High in great joy and happiness. The goal of vital, scriptural religion is now complete in unfettered trust and in abundant love. Knowledge of God and all holy affections cover the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven as a bride to be embraced. "This city is wholly new," Wesley notes, "belonging not to this world, not to the millennium, but to eternity." ⁹⁴ And the universal love of God, transcending the earlier sinful divisions of humanity, is triumphant through the ministrations of the lamb who was slain before the foundation of the earth. God's ultimate will of holy love has not been defeated by sin, death, or evil, but is wonderfully established in the radiance of the divine glory: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

Today and Tomorrow: John Wesley's Practical Theology as a Resource for Discipleship and Service

While exploring the social location of John Wesley's theology as well as its current relevance, we have placed a premium on the primary sources. In a way similar to literary criticism, we have focused on the world of the text with its themes, motifs, recurring patterns of expression, and parallel structures. And though the numerous traditional resources that fed into Wesley's thought undoubtedly help illuminate his contextual theology, Wesley's own statements in turn suggest how and to what extent this import from tradition should be appropriated lest distortion of a very sophisticated theology emerge. In other words, a misreading of Wesley's conjunctive theology will likely occur when the cues for its proper interpretation are drawn not from his own writings, and their larger historical context, but from some preferred theological tradition that now functions in a real sense as a metanarrative. Thus, in order to break out of the specter of what Outler had called the coterie theologies,⁹⁵ we have not only highlighted the salience of Wesley's own texts, but also interpreted them in light of an array, a sheer panoply, of traditional resources (Anglicans, German Pietists, Puritans, early church fathers, and so on) that streamed into his artful and carefully balanced theology.

When such an approach is taken, the elements of holiness and grace emerge as an integrating theme in Wesley's theology. Attentive to the style of his theological reflections, we have parsed holiness in terms of the conjunction of "holy love" that represents not only the goal of Wesley's theology but also his abiding concern. From his reading of Jeremy Taylor in 1725 to crafting the sermon "The Circumcision of the Heart" in 1733; from the *Collection of Hymns* in 1741 to "The Character of a Methodist" the following year; and from the Conference Minutes in 1744 to *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* in 1766, Wesley was in earnest to realize the height, depth, and extent of holy love not only in his own life, but also in the communities of faith that he served so well. In time, his particular burden as a pastor, teacher, and evangelist became how he could help to midwife the new birth, the very beginning of holy love, properly speaking, among those people whom the great eighteenth-century revival had called forth to participate in nothing less than the body of Christ.

With this larger purpose of sharing the glad tidings of salvation, Wesley not

surprisingly rejected abstract, philosophical, and speculative accounts of the Christian faith and instead focused on what he had termed "practical divinity." Thus, much of Wesley's theological interest devolved upon the hope and task of raising up genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, those who were willing, indeed eager, to go beyond the form of religion in order to taste something of its power. Not content with the folk religion that had characterized his day, Wesley not only raised the question, "How do I become a Christian?" but as an Arminian, he also posed the equally vital and reformist one, "How do I remain (and thrive as) a Christian?" questions that in the context of grace and holy love gave his overall theology a remarkably practical, though serious, flavor. Simply put, Wesley's practical divinity, painstakingly crafted over time, demonstrates the outworking of holy love as people are transformed through the grace of God such that they bear the image of God afresh, washed by the blood of Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

However, in order to be of greater pastoral service to his neighbor, Wesley expressed his practical theology, giving it specificity and direction, in an order of salvation that had great instructional value for those who wanted to take on the yoke of discipleship. As a theological model, crafted over time, the Wesleyan order of salvation not only evidenced the bent of Wesley's mind in its preference for order, coherence (parallelism), and method, but also contained, theologically speaking, the two foci of his ongoing ministry in terms of justification/regeneration and entire sanctification. As such the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* offered aspirants a sense of orientation and suggested *appropriate* pastoral counsel at each step along the way.

The consequence of Wesley's soteriological intentionality as reflected in his practical divinity in general and his order of salvation in particular was to make the graces of holy love accessible to all people but especially to the poor, the very least of all. Invited to participate in a class meeting, the downtrodden came to know themselves not through the diminishing scripts prevalent in eighteenth-century British society, whereby they were mistakenly labeled as lazy and shiftless, but through the gospel narrative itself, whereby they were invited to receive the richest love and the most profound graces. Indeed, through the ministrations of the life of Methodism, the destitute were no longer alienated but embraced, no longer dispossessed but empowered, no longer forgotten but cherished. Having been forgiven and renewed by God in Christ, having received the witness of the Holy Spirit that they indeed were the beloved of the Lord, the poor were gifted in so many ways that they had not hitherto imagined. Such

graces created the bonds of fellowship and care that transcended the divisions of class and hateful pride. Methodist life, then, offered the poor a different narrative through which they could come to know themselves in a new way, that is, as nothing less than the beloved of the Lord, as the children of the Most High.

So then, in light of Wesley's abiding pastoral interests reflected in his preference of practical divinity, for those who are epistemologically oriented, who seek to order the truths of the gospel to some grand speculative scheme, who neglect the care of the poor in the service of ideas, and who yet seek to demonstrate the unity of all knowledge in Jesus Christ, they will perhaps find Wesley's occasional pieces and his practical theology somewhat disappointing. Wesley, after all, was no theological giant, no system builder. "Christian eggheads," as Outler pointed out, "have never loved him—nor was he fond of us."⁹⁶ To be sure, the principal and abiding question that Wesley repeatedly asked himself as a leader in the church was not "What can I know?" but "How can I love?"

For those who are traditionally oriented, who seek to distill the eclectic genius of Wesley through some preferred theological tradition, who delight in discerning what sources of that preference informed Wesley's practical ministry, they will perhaps find the breadth of Wesley's theological judgments astounding, though somewhat disconcerting. It is, therefore, perhaps best to consider Wesley's practical theology on its own terms, not as an unswerving, faithful reflection of any one theological *tradition*, with the possible exception of Anglicanism, but as a well-crafted, intentional, and ecumenically relevant synthesis as Wesley grappled with the various tasks of ministry in light of both the normative value of *Scripture* and the engaging context of a diversity of traditions. It is tempting, no doubt, to emphasize one of these traditions to the detriment of the others such that our reading of Wesley will emerge either as a "Protestant" or as a "Catholic" one. However, it is best to forego this artificial and constructed attempt and instead to rejoice in the breadth of Wesley's intricate theological perspective and in the nuances of his carefully crafted theology.

For those who are soteriologically oriented and who are suffering, who bear the burdens of wrenching sin, whether personal or social, who have felt the anguish and the near despair of a divided will whereby the mind assents to what goodness it knows, but the heart simply does not follow; for those who seek the freedom of the love of God and neighbor, but know only the slavery of self-will on a personal level, and the bondage of an intolerant tribalism on a group level; for those who hanker after the good community, in which fellowship is a

gracious reality, and in which consumerism and competition do not divide; for those who are tired, old, and lonely, who have been forsaken by an indifferent, materialistic society that considers them nothing; for those who yearn for a gracious word of liberty, real liberty, not the phony kind of liberty that the world offers that leaves people under the grievous *dominion* of sin while it simply polishes their chains, for all these people, these hurting people, the practical theology of John Wesley was good news indeed. It proclaimed nothing less than liberty to the captives as well as the acceptable year of the Lord. It offered succor where there was neglect; hope where there was despair; love where there was none. Pastorally sensitive without diminishing the high calling of the gospel, Wesley developed a ministry that was marked by a sophisticated balance, a balance that evidenced nothing less than abiding holy love, the very emblem of historic Methodism itself.

Notes

Introduction: John Wesley's Practical Divinity: A Theology of Holy Love

1. Some of the material of this introduction has been drawn from my essay "Rethinking the Systematic Nature of John Wesley's Theology," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 86, nos. 2 and 3 (Summer and Autumn 2004): 309–30, and is used by permission. This work was originally presented as a plenary address at the tercentenary celebration of *John Wesley: Life, Legend and Legacy* held at the international conference gathered at the University of Manchester, England, on June 16, 2003.

2. Albert C. Outler, "Towards a Re-Appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, eds. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 39–54.

3. Ibid., 40.

4. Ibid., 43. Other treatments during this period also grappled with the question in what way Wesley was a theologian. See Robert Brown, *John Wesley's Theology: The Principle of Its Vitality and Its Progressive Stages of Development* (London: E. Stock, 1965); and Jean Orcibal, "The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 1, ed. R. E. Davies and E. G. Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 83–111.

5. Albert C. Outler, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," in *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 75–95.

6. Ibid., 77.

7. Frank Baker, "Practical Divinity—John Wesley's Doctrinal Agenda for Methodism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 7.

8. John Wesley, *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue*, 50 vols. (Bristol: Farley, 1749–1755), ix.

9. See Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

10. Ibid., 7:74. This must not be misunderstood in an anthropocentric way but as emblematic of the life of practical, genuine faith in a holy and transcendent God who calls the community to trust and faithfulness.

11. Donald A. Thorsen, "Experimental Method in the Practical Theology of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 125. Thorsen also points out that "Wesley's references to 'experimental' referred to more than mere empirical experimentation; they included the felt awareness or witness of God's Holy Spirit." See p. 123.

12. Ibid., 127. For more on Wesley's epistemology, see Mitsuo Shimizu, "Epistemology in the Thought of John Wesley" (dissertation, Drew University, 1980); and Laurence W. Wood, "Wesley's Epistemology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (Spring 1975): 48–59.

13. Fredrick W. McDonald, "John Wesley the Theologian," *Methodist Recorder* 31 (1891): 255.

14. Baker, "Practical Divinity," 9. See also Baker's classic work on Wesley's relation to the Church of England in Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).

15. Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources—Tidings, 1975), 1.

16. Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 1:106.

17. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

18. See Emil Brunner, *Truth as Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943).

19. Albert C. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies: An Agenda for 'Phase III,'" in *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*.

20. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 35.

21. See George C. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984); Franz Hildebrandt, *From Luther to Wesley* (London: Lutterworth, 1951); Ernest Gordon Rupp, *Methodism in Relation to the Protestant Tradition* (London: Epworth Press, 1954); and Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).

[22.](#) Albert C. Outler, "John Wesley as a Theologian—Then as Now" in *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 58.

[23.](#) A nearly exclusive Protestant reading of Wesley's theology would be no more accurate than a Catholic one. Rather it is the conjunction, the tension, of both a Protestant and Catholic reading that is most descriptive of his theology.

[24.](#) Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 71. Outler explores the substance of this "third alternative" by noting that it was "an interesting—and original anomaly (viz., a Protestant doctrine of original sin minus most of the other elements in classical Protestant soteriology, *plus* a catholic doctrine of perfection *without* its full panoply of priesthood and statecraft." See *ibid.*, 33.

[25.](#) Outler, "A New Future," 139–40.

[26.](#) See Maddox's *Responsible Grace*.

[27.](#) Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, *Letters II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 182.

[28.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:194.

[29.](#) *Ibid.*, 2:40–41.

[30.](#) See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:312; 1:413; 2:43; 2:47; 2:334; and Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 11:368.

[31.](#) Thomas Jay Oord and Michael Lodahl, *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), 25.

[32.](#) *Ibid.*, 30.

[33.](#) John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 5:238.

[34.](#) *Ibid.*, 5:127.

[35.](#) John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, n.d.), 667.

[36.](#) Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 160.

[37.](#) Richard S. Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness: The Theological Formulation* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 16.

[38.](#) Brunner, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 187.

[39.](#) Jackson, *Works*, 8:290.

[40.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:274.

[41.](#) *Ibid.*, 1:236.

[42.](#) *Ibid.*, 1:262.

[43.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:290.

[44.](#) Ibid.

[45.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:194. Emphasis is mine.

[46.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:223.

[47.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 3:222.

[48.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:10.

[49.](#) Ibid., 2:10.

[50.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:486. Nevertheless, God can send not only terror but also comfort by means of the law. Commenting on a watch-night service held in January 1761, Wesley writes: "Though I preached the law from the beginning of my sermon to the end, yet many were exceedingly comforted—so plain it is that God can send either terror or comfort to the heart, by whatever means it pleaseth him." See W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18-23, *Journals and Diaries I-VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 21:301.

[51.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:22. For additional references in Wesley's writings that indicate the error of preaching only the gospel to unawakened sinners, see Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, *Letters II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 418, 483, and 485–87.

[52.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:318. Emphasis is mine.

[53.](#) Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 26, *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535, *Chapters 1–4*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehman (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing, 1999), 309. For Wesley's criticisms of Luther's estimation of the moral law, see Jerry L. Walls, "John Wesley's Critique of Martin Luther," *Methodist History* 20, no. 1 (October 1981): 29–41.

[54.](#) John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:360 (Book II, Chapter VII, Section 12).

[55.](#) This distinction is also apparent in Wesley's reply to his Calvinist detractors who accused him of moralism—and other things—in the wake of the Conference Minutes of 1770. Wesley responds that "the lines in question do not refer to the condition of obtaining, but of continuing in, the favour of God." See Telford, *Letters*, 5:259.

[56.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:18. It is interesting to note that all the uses of the law for Wesley are theological. Thus, the political use of the law, *politicus usus*, as found, for example, in the theologies of both Luther and Calvin, is not evident in Wesley's articulation of the functions of law.

[57.](#) Oord and Lodahl, *Relational Holiness*, 138; and Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 152.

[58.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:545. Emphasis is mine.

[59.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:230. Emphasis is mine.

[60.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:117.

[61.](#) Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 34.

[62.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:98.

[63.](#) Ibid., 1:260. Emphasis is mine.

[64.](#) Ibid., 1:99. Emphasis is mine. For more on a Wesleyan assessment of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, see Albert C. Outler, "A Focus of the Holy Spirit: Spirit and Spirituality in John Wesley," in *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 159–74; and Arvest N. Lawson, *John Wesley and the Holy Spirit* (New York: Vantage Press, 1996).

[65.](#) Maddox elaborates: "Given their juridical focus, Western theologians have identified God's grace predominately as *pardon* [or favor], or the unmerited forgiveness of our guilt through Christ. By contrast, Eastern theologians construe grace primarily in terms of the *power* to heal our infirm nature that comes through participation in God." See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 84. But many German Pietists and Moravians were known for their emphasis on participatory themes as well.

[66.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:248. The new birth as a gift of grace was also a strong theme in much of Pietist literature.

[67.](#) William R. Cannon, "Methodism—Our Theology," *Asbury Seminary Journal* 40, no. 2 (Winter 1985): 6.

[68.](#) Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 170.

[69.](#) I have forsaken the language of *via salutis*, which I once employed, and have reverted back to Outler's terminology of *ordo salutis*. In my judgment, the phrase *via salutis* as employed by some, though not all, contemporary scholars is simply too open-ended and therefore fails to place sufficient emphasis on the *actualization* of grace in its preference for *process* (gradualism). Beyond this, the language of *via salutis* fails to consider, in any significant way, the actual structure of Wesley's order of salvation, that is, its sequence and coherence, especially in terms of the parallelism that is an important clue to the interpretation of its two undeniable foci. And finally, the claim that Wesley

himself employed the terminology of *via salutis*, as reflected in the title of the sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," is based upon a misunderstanding and fails to distinguish two different senses of the term "way." Thus, in the title of this key sermon, Wesley is not referring to the actual *path* of salvation itself but is highlighting the *manner* of its authority and substantiation. It is, after all, the *Scripture* way as opposed to some other (traditional, rational, and so on) way of salvation that is outlined therein. For more on this issue, see Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 185–90.

[70](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:169. Emphasis is mine. In his sermon "The Repentance of Believers," Wesley reveals that the instantaneous aspect of entire sanctification is crucial with respect to the actualization or realization of heart purity in the life of the believer. He elaborates: "But if there be no such second change, if there be no instantaneous deliverance after justification, if there be none but a gradual work of God (that there is a gradual work none denies) then we must be content, as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:346.

[71](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:332.

[72](#). Cell, *Rediscovery of John Wesley*, 347.

[73](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:299.

Chapter 1: The God of Holy Love

[1](#). Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 48.

[2](#). John Wesley, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists* (London: William Strahan, 1784), 306.

[3](#). John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1975), 223.

[4](#). See Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1972).

[5](#). Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 2:39.

[6](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 637 (1 John 4:8).

[7](#). John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 6:136.

8. Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 63.

9. Outler, *Sermons*, 4:62.

10. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, 3 vols. (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 1:4.

11. H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, vol. 1 (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1940–1943), 369.

12. Richard S. Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness: The Theological Formulation* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 14.

13. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God: Dogmatics*, trans. Olive Wyon, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 1:158.

14. Wesley, *OT Notes*, 1:288–89.

15. Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978), 11:368. See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:413.

16. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:71. Emphasis is mine. For other references to "holy love" as integral to Wesley's understanding of God and the transformation that knowing such a God effects in the saints, see Outler, *Sermons*, 1:194; 1:312; 2:40–41, 43; 2:47; and 2:334.

17. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:580–81. In this same sermon, Wesley considers the first of the six petitions of the Lord's Prayer ("Hallowed be thy name") and notes that "the name of God is God himself—the nature of God so far as it can be discovered to man. It means, therefore, together with his existence, all his attributes or perfections" (1:580–81).

18. William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 161.

19. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:358. See also Outler's note number 1, for the sources for Wesley's distinction of *aeternitas a parte ante* and *aeternitas a parte post*.

20. Ibid., 2:359.

21. Ibid., 2:361.

22. Ibid. A "process theology" reading of this issue, and one distinct from Wesley's own judgments, can be found in Lodahl's observation that "God has always had some world with which God labors— some world which 'comes' to God, as it were, as a 'given.'" See Michael Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2003), 101.

23. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:362. Many early Greek philosophers maintained that

matter was not created and therefore eternal, especially Parmenides and the later Atomists such as Democritus and Leucippus. See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, *Greece and Rome* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1985), 47–53 and 72 ff.

[24.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:61.

[25.](#) Ibid., 4:42. In order to support his notion of the ubiquity of God, Wesley cites an ancient author who maintained that "all things are full of God," *Iovis omnis plena* (p. 44). Outler attributes this Latin phrase to Virgil (70–19 B.C.), which is accurate since it appears in this Roman poet's *Eclogues*. However, the original source of this phrase is much earlier. Here, as in many other cases, the Romans borrowed from the Greeks, and in this particular case from Thales, the father of Western philosophy (624–547 B.C.). See the fragments of Thales's work contained in J. Burnet, trans., *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: A. & C. Black, 1920), 136–39.

[26.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:42.

[27.](#) Ibid., 2:570. See John C. English, "John Wesley and Isaac Newton's 'System of the World,'" *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 48 (October 1991): 69–86.

[28.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:46. For other references to the omnipresence of God, see Outler, *Sermons*, 2:569 and 3:9.

[29.](#) Ibid., 4:46.

[30.](#) Ibid., 4:62. Wesley apparently accorded a large role to reason as he thought through many of the implications of the basic attributes of God. For two studies that explore this generous role, see Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church in the Age of Reason, 1648–1789* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1960); and B. E. Jones, "Reason and Religion Joined; the Place of Reason in Wesley's Thought," *London Quarterly & Holborn Review* 189 (April 1964): 110–13.

[31.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:62.

[32.](#) Ibid., 2:539. For a treatment that considers God as genuine agent in the world, see Ted A. Campbell, "John Wesley and Conyers Middleton on Divine Intervention in History," *Church History* 55, no. 1 (March 1986): 39–49.

[33.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:417.

[34.](#) Ibid., 2:420.

[35.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:452. Hiding and revealing, darkness and light (in accordance with the manifestation of how human beings appear in the sight of a holy God), were themes developed by Wesley in his writings. See Roderick Thomas Leupp, "The Art of God: Light and Darkness in the Thought of John

Wesley" (dissertation, Drew University, 1985).

[36.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:44.

[37.](#) Ibid., 4:62. Thomas C. Oden points out the divine omnipotence does not mean that God can do literally anything. Rather, "Omnipotence may be defined as the perfect ability of God to do all things that are consistent with the divine character." See Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God: Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 75.

[38.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:580–81.

[39.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:480. Something of the importance that Wesley attached to the issues under review in his conversation with William Law (especially the doctrine of omnipotence) is revealed in the observation of the former: "yet it is now one main hinge on which the controversy between Christianity and Deism turns." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:480.

[40.](#) Ibid., 10:473. For a view that maintains, once again, in a way remarkably distinct from Wesley, that "omnipotence, strictly interpreted, implies that God exercises all power and thus that creatures exercise *none*," see Lodahl, *God of Nature*, 96. Emphasis is mine.

[41.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:101.

[42.](#) Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:47–48. Emphasis is mine.

[43.](#) Lodahl, *God of Nature*, 96.

[44.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:415.

[45.](#) Ibid, 2:416.

[46.](#) Ibid.

[47.](#) Ibid., 2:417. For one of the best treatments of Wesley's theological disputes with the Calvinists of his own day, see Herbert McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Publishing, 2001).

[48.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:417.

[49.](#) Ibid.

[50.](#) Ibid.

[51.](#) Ibid., 2:418.

[52.](#) Ibid. See also Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Wilmore, Ky.: Wesley Heritage Press, 1988) for an exploration of Wesley's reflections on predestination as the Calvinists of his own age had understood it.

[53.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:418.

[54.](#) Ibid.

[55.](#) Ibid. Charles Wesley held similar views on the topic of election and

predestination as did his brother John. Indeed, some scholars argue that Charles composed the hymn "Universal Redemption" that was appended to John's sermon "Free Grace." See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:559, n.94. See also John Roger Tyson, "God's Everlasting Love: Charles Wesley and the Predestinarian Controversy," *Evangelical Journal* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 47–62.

[56.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:418.

[57.](#) Ibid.

[58.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:207.

[59.](#) Ibid.

[60.](#) Ibid., 10:217.

[61.](#) Ibid., 10:370. For a more accurate assessment of Toplady's view on predestination, see W. C. G. Proctor, "Toplady on Predestination," *Churchman: Journal of Anglican Theology* 77 (1963): 30–37.

[62.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:554. Emphasis is mine.

[63.](#) Ibid.

[64.](#) Ibid., 3:548. Emphasis is mine.

[65.](#) Ibid., 3:550. For the larger impact of Wesley's Arminianism on the English revival, see Emmanuel D. Mbennah and J. M. Vorster, "The Influence of Arminian Conception of Predestination on the 18th-Century Wesleyan Revival," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 24, no. 1 (1998): 161–87.

[66.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:550–51.

[67.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:459.

[68.](#) Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 25–26, *Letters I–II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25:179.

[69.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:555.

[70.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:229.

[71.](#) Ibid.

[72.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:554–55.

[73.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:39. In a way distinct from several other modern treatments, John Cobb rightly discerns the important role that the moral law played in Wesley's overall theology. See John B. Cobb Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 115–35.

[74.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:346.

[75.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 25 (Matthew 6:9). The Anglican *Thirty-nine Articles* also displayed the roles of God in terms of creation and preservation as revealed in the following: "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without

body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible . . ." See Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), 487.

[76.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 212 (John 1:1).

[77.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:537. In a departure from Wesley's views, Lodahl speculates, in line with process theology, that "God has created it [the world] out of *next to nothing*." In justification of this claim, this current scholar points out that process theologians contend that "our present experience is a fundamental clue for intuiting the way it has always been. There simply has *always* been some kind of world with which God creatively labors, some sort of 'given' with which God must work." See Lodahl, *God of Nature*, 88–89.

[78.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:70.

[79.](#) Ibid. H. Ray Dunning develops the truth that God "was the sole Source of all existence" in his *Grace, Faith and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 241.

[80.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:335.

[81.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:50. In this same sermon, Wesley draws the relation between spiritual (invisible) things and material (visible) ones and makes a moral application: "I ask in the name of God by what standard do you judge of the value of things? By the visible or the invisible world? Bring the matter to an issue in a single instance: which do you judge best, that your son should be a pious cobbler or a profane lord? Which appears to you most eligible, that your daughter should be a child of God, and walk on foot, or a child of the devil, and ride in a coach and six?" See Outler, *Sermons*, 4:55–56.

[82.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:6. Emphasis is mine. Along these lines, Wesley also contends, quoting Hesiod, that "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth Unseen." See this same sermon, 3:5.

[83.](#) Ibid., 3:11.

[84.](#) Ibid., 3:14. See also E. Gordon Rupp, *Principalities and Powers* (London: Epworth Press, 1952).

[85.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:17–18. And it is precisely because angels were endued from the outset with liberty or a power of self-determination that they were capable of falling, of being perverted in evil.

[86.](#) Ibid., 3:16.

[87.](#) Ibid., 2:396–97. Hynson maintains that Wesley likens the world to be "a massive volume that proclaims God to us not in words, but in pictures of the

divine. These are only analogies of the Creator, finite, yet they provide glimmerings of Him." See Leon O. Hynson, *To Reform the Nation: Theological Foundations of Wesley's Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1984), 66.

[88.](#) Wesley, *OT Notes*, 1:6.

[89.](#) Ibid., 1:9.

[90.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:447. John Cobb points out that "Wesleyans are among those who today are taking the lead in the affirmation, in the language of the World Council of Churches, of the integrity of creation." See Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 55.

[91.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:447. For care, even affection, that Wesley showed toward animals, see Thomas Ferrier Hulme, *John Wesley and His Horse* (London: Epworth Press, 1933).

[92.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:407.

[93.](#) Ibid., 3:13. See also Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:324.

[94.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:538. For other references to God as preserver, see Outler, *Sermons*, 2:539; 4:71; Wesley, *Sunday Service*, 306; Wesley, *NT Notes*, 25 (Matthew 6:9).

[95.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:578.

[96.](#) Ibid., 3:91.

[97.](#) Ibid. For a work that draws a connection among the goodness of the creation, its fall through sin, and its renewal through grace, see Kenneth J. Collins, "The New Creation as a Multivalent Theme in John Wesley's Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 77–102.

[98.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:363. This "restriction" on God to act in accordance with justice is no restriction at all given Wesley's larger argument. In other words, since the divine will (the standard of justice) is none other than God, viewed in another way, then such a "restriction" is actually perfect freedom, the freedom to act with respect to the being and nature of God.

[99.](#) Ibid., 10:361.

[100.](#) Ibid., 10:361–62. For a somewhat different list of the elements that make up divine sovereignty, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:235.

[101.](#) Ibid., 10:260.

[102.](#) Ibid., 10:362.

[103.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:9. For an examination of the influence of Christian Platonists on Wesley's reflections on the moral law, see Kenneth J. Collins, "John Wesley's Theology of Law" (dissertation, Drew University, 1984).

[104.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:10.

[105.](#) Ibid.

[106.](#) Ibid., 2:13. Such a view of Wesley, since it appeals to an objective, transcendent order, is in contrast to postmodern understandings that deconstruct the universality of the moral (and natural) law (judged to be a metanarrative) in favor of a plurality of social constructs, each of which is deemed true. For a helpful guide to the postmodern perspective on law and other matters, see Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 39–56.

[107.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:12.

[108.](#) Ibid., 2:13.

[109.](#) William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 174.

[110.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:536. Outler contends that Wesley's understanding of this doctrine was dependent on the earlier work of such Anglicans as Hooker, Pearson, Ussher, and Wilkins. See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:534.

[111.](#) Ibid., 2:539. On the question whether this knowledge of God that Wesley has just described includes knowledge of true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, and hence what philosophers call middle knowledge, see Barry E. Bryant, "Molina, Arminius, Plaifere, Goad, and Wesley on Human Free-Will, Divine Omniscience, and Middle Knowledge," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27 (Spring-Fall 1992): 93–103.

[112.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:539.

[113.](#) Ibid., 2:544. For Wesley, the principal effect of a belief in the particular providence of God is serenity as demonstrated in his commentary on Matthew 6:31, in which he writes: "We will not therefore indulge these unnecessary, these useless, these mischievous cares. We will not borrow the anxieties and distresses of the morrow, to aggravate those of the present day. Rather we will cheerfully repose ourselves on that heavenly Father, who knows we have need of these things; who has given us the life, which is more than meat, and the body, which is more than raiment." See John Wesley, *NT Notes*, 28 (Matthew 6:31).

[114.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:546.

[115.](#) Ibid.

[116.](#) Ibid., 2:546–48. Wesley also argues for a particular providence in his journal account of 6 July 1781, in which he writes: "It is true, the doctrine of a particular providence (and any but a particular providence is no providence at

all) is absolutely out of fashion in England. And a *prudent* author might write this to gain the favour of his gentle readers. Yet I will not say, this is real prudence, because he may lose hereby more than he gains—as the majority even of Britons, to this day, retain some sort of respect for the Bible." See W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 23:214.

[117](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:541, n.30.

[118](#). Ibid., 2:542. Wesley lays the fault as to why Muslims have not embraced Christ on the backs of nominal Christians. He states: "The grand stumbling-block being thus happily removed out of the way, namely, the lives of the Christians, the Mahometans will look upon them with other eyes, and begin to give attention to their words. And as their words will be clothed with divine energy, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit." Outler, *Sermons*, 2:495.

[119](#). Ibid. 2:543.

[120](#). Ibid. For a discussion of the motif of real Christianity that is integral to understanding Wesley's doctrine of salvation, see Kenneth J. Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

[121](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:548.

[122](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 14:300.

[123](#). Ibid., 14:30. Interestingly enough, Wesley informs the reader that although he has employed the text of Buddeus, he nevertheless has incorporated the plan of Derham in the way in which *A Survey* is structured and divided. See *ibid.*

[124](#). Ibid., 14:300.

[125](#). John Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, (Lancaster, Pa.: William Hamilton, 1810), vol. 2, section 139.

[126](#). Ibid., vol. 2, section 112.

[127](#). Ibid., vol. 2, section 134. Two current scientists, one a paleontologist, the other an astronomer, make the case that though the cosmos is composed of numerous galaxies, billions of stars, life on many planets may actually be rare. See Peter Ward, and Donald Brownlee, *Rare Earth: Why Complex Life Is Uncommon in the Universe* (London: Springer Verlag, 2003). Moreover, there is also the problem of communication. Thus, even if intelligent life existed, given the size of the universe, and the limit of the speed of light *within* time/space, contact would remain virtually impossible. Beyond this, the ongoing expansion

of the universe itself (which *can* exceed the speed of light) simply compounds this communication problem. See Steve Nadis, "Will Dark Energy Steal the Stars?" *Astronomy* (November 2004): 100–105.

[128](#). Wesley, *Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*, vol. 2, section 110. In this same section Wesley notes: "In the room of this, the Copernican system is now generally received, which supposes the sun to be fixed in the centre, without any other motion, than that round his own axis."

[129](#). For an account that explores the inquisitions in Venice and at the Vatican, see Michael White, *The Pope and the Heretic: The True Story of Giordano Bruno, the Man Who Dared to Defy the Roman Inquisition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002).

[130](#). Charles Seife, *Alpha & Omega: The Search for the Beginning and End of the Universe* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 32.

[131](#). And one of the key missions of the Hubble space telescope is to determine how fast the universe is expanding. See *ibid.*, 53.

[132](#). Stephen W. Hawking, *The Theory of Everything: The Origin and Fate of the Universe* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: New Millennium Press, 2002), 104.

[133](#). *Ibid.*, 15.

[134](#). Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 135–36. Interestingly enough, Hawking notes that when he attended a conference on cosmology organized by the Jesuits at the Vatican, the Pope cautioned those in attendance not to "inquire into the big bang itself because that was the moment of Creation and therefore the work of God." Hawking was glad that the Pope was unaware of the talk that he had just given that argued there might have been no beginning, no moment of Creation. See *ibid.*, 116.

[135](#). John Gribbin, *Almost Everyone's Guide to Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 213.

[136](#). *Ibid.*, 215.

[137](#). Fred Adams, *Our Living Multiverse* (New York: Pi Press, 2004), 64–65.

Chapter 2: Humanity: Created in Holy Love, Fallen in Nature

[1](#). Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 4:21.

[2.](#) Ibid., 4:20.

[3.](#) Ibid., 3:456.

[4.](#) William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 179.

[5.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:460.

[6.](#) Ibid., 4:296.

[7.](#) Ibid., 4:23. Wesley adds that in the future, at the resurrection, body and soul will be joined once more: "In my present state of existence I undoubtedly consist both of soul and body. And so I shall again after the resurrection to all eternity." Ibid.

[8.](#) Ibid., 3:460.

[9.](#) Ibid. Wesley does not believe that the soul is composed of the same four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) that make up the body. Lacking the principal ingredient of self-motion, these elements are of a different nature. See Outler, *Sermons*, 4:22.

[10.](#) Ibid., 2:188.

[11.](#) Ibid. 4:355.

[12.](#) Ibid.

[13.](#) Ibid., 1:184. For a balanced assessment of Wesley's understanding of humanity, see Seung-An Im, "John Wesley's Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Tension between the Latin Western Patristic Tradition (Augustine) and the Greek Eastern Patristic Tradition (Gregory of Nyssa)" (dissertation, Drew University, 1994). See also, Hiroaki Matsumoto, "John Wesley's Understanding of Man," *Wesleyan Quarterly Review* 4 (1967): 83–102.

[14.](#) Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978), 9:381.

[15.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:409.

[16.](#) Ibid., 4:293.

[17.](#) Ibid., 2:439.

[18.](#) Ibid. Clapper conceives the will in terms of a complex of tempers, dispositions, and affections that take "objects." See Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989). For a model that stresses subjectivity, calling, and evoking, the means by which the tempers are addressed, see Kenneth J. Collins, "John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers and Affections," *Methodist*

History 36, no. 3 (April 1998): 162–75.

[19.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:294.

[20.](#) Ibid., 2:439.

[21.](#) Ibid., 2:410.

[22.](#) Ibid., 4:295.

[23.](#) Ibid., 2:439. Emphasis is mine. Compare Wesley's view of the role of understanding, as a part of the natural image of God, with Maddox's account of this faculty in North American Methodism. See Randy L. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life: Lessons from North American Methodism," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 50, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 151–72.

[24.](#) Dunning points out that the image of God involves a fourfold relationship: with God, with others, with the earth, and with self. See H. Ray Dunning, *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 45.

[25.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:440.

[26.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:355.

[27.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:440.

[28.](#) Ibid.

[29.](#) Ibid. 2:442.

[30.](#) Ibid., 3:349. Wesley makes a distinction between reward and glory in this sermon, a distinction that keeps his doctrine of salvation free from any notion of merit: "He honours men to be, in this sense, 'workers together with him.' By this he means the reward is ours, while the glory redounds to him." Ibid.

[31.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:346–47. Emphasis is mine. Wesley also explores the moral image in terms of righteousness and true holiness, that is, in terms of the love of God in his sermons "The New Birth" (in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:188), "On the Fall of Man" (ibid., 2:411), "The End of Christ's Coming" (ibid., 2:475), and "On Perfection" (ibid., 3:75).

[32.](#) See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:355; and Outler, *Sermons*, 4:354, and 4:30.

[33.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:188. The importance of the moral image of God for Wesley is revealed in his lifelong pursuit of the holy life, which basically began in 1725 (roughly speaking) with his reading of the triumvirate of à Kempis, Taylor, and Law. And the sermons "The Circumcision of the Heart" (1733), "Christian Perfection" (1741), "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (1765), and "The More Excellent Way" (1787) mark important points along the way. Moreover, Wesley closely associates salvation with the restoration of the moral

image of God in many of these pieces.

[34.](#) Ibid., 2:441. It is also interesting to note the way in which Wesley describes sinners in this sermon: "whoever does not know, or love, or enjoy God, and is not careful about the matter does in effect disclaim the nature of man, and degrade himself into a beast." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:449–50.

[35.](#) Ibid., 2:400. Although it appears that in this sermon Wesley is linking the possibility of sin with the *natural* image of God, especially in terms of his appeal to understanding, will, and liberty, he nevertheless underscores humanity's "capacity of determining [itself], of choosing good or evil," an element that typifies the moral image.

[36.](#) Ibid., 2:9.

[37.](#) Ibid., 2:7.

[38.](#) Ibid., 2:10.

[39.](#) Ibid., 2:7.

[40.](#) Wesley appeals to natural law (which, by the way, he also links elsewhere with the moral law by maintaining that the ten commandments are an expression of natural law) in his treatise *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, in which he affirms that liberty is the right of every human being, since it is a right based on the law of nature. Moreover, Wesley notes in a way reminiscent of Thomas Aquinas that human law (positive law) cannot "change the nature of things. . . . Notwithstanding ten thousand laws, right is right, and wrong is wrong still." See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Prima Secundae (I–II), questions 94–95; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:70,79.

[41.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:434.

[42.](#) Ibid., 9:435.

[43.](#) For an excellent treatment of diabolology, which takes the approach of the history of ideas, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

[44.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:476.

[45.](#) Ibid.

[46.](#) Ibid., 2:477. See also Henry D. Rack, "Doctors, Demons and Early Methodist Healing," in *The Church and Healing*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford: The Ecclesiastical History Society, 1982), 137–52, for a study that explores the reality of the demonic in terms of human healing.

[47.](#) See Matthew Baasten, *Pride According to Gregory the Great: A Study of the Moralia* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986).

[48.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:476.

[49.](#) Ibid.

[50.](#) Ibid., 2:477.

[51.](#) Ibid., 2:402–3. Though Wesley in following the Genesis accounts attributes the beginning of human evil to Eve, he nevertheless appears to place the greater blame on Adam who sinned in a manner different from his mate. Thus, the Methodist leader contends that Eve was deceived, tricked so to speak, but that Adam was not. The man, in contrast to the woman, sinned in a self-conscious and deliberate fashion, "with his eyes open." See *ibid.*, 2:403.

[52.](#) John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 570 (Hebrews 3:12). Emphasis is mine. See also Wesley's comments on Luke 15:12 and John 16:9. And though Wesley states that "pride is the great root of all unkind affections," in his notes on James 4:6, this does not detract from his earlier emphasis, since his references to unbelief are far more numerous and substantial. Indeed, even in his notes on James, Wesley is, no doubt, presuming that unbelief lies behind pride, which is then productive of "all unkind affections." Put another way, pride is penultimate (and therefore the root of much evil), but not ultimate.

[53.](#) Ibid., 260.

[54.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:480–81.

[55.](#) Ibid., 4:297. It seems that the notion of mutability is necessary to clarify Wesley's thought here, for if something is truly immortal, it is *never* capable of dying. This problem, however, is solved by arguing that Adam was created immortal, though mutable. In other words, the immortality of the body could indeed be lost through sin.

[56.](#) Ibid., 1:185.

[57.](#) Ibid., 4:165. John Cobb disagrees with Wesley on this point and maintains that "few today would agree that physical mortality in general, affecting both humans and animals, is a result of human sinfulness, even when that sinfulness is simply part of the universal, given, situation, does make sense." See John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 82.

[58.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 375 (Romans 5:14).

[59.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:423.

[60.](#) Ibid., 2:398. Outler translates this phrase from Horace as "wasting disease and a new plague of fevers fell upon the earth." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:398, n. 44. Moreover, in his sermon "On the Fall of Man," Wesley continues this theme and notes: "Immediately pain followed sin. When he [Adam] lost his innocence

he lost his happiness." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:403.

[61.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:256.

[62.](#) Ibid., 9:259. In this same treatise, Wesley affirms that "death is the wages of sin; and from this punishment of sin, none of mankind can claim a discharge." See *ibid.*, 9:368.

[63.](#) Ibid., 9:291.

[64.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:185.

[65.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:402.

[66.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:290.

[67.](#) Ibid., 4:298. In many respects, Wesley viewed the work of his preachers as devolving on the activity of saving souls not in an individualistic sense, but in a personal and corporate way. See Harold G. Fiddick, "The Care of Souls: John Wesley on the Preacher's Work and Ways," *Methodist Recorder* 73, no. 3 (1932): 9.

[68.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:185. See also "The New Birth" in which, once again, Wesley recounts the death of the soul in the sense of its separation from the life of God. See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:189–90.

[69.](#) Ibid., 2:361. Wesley also argues here that all spirits are clothed with immortality. In other words, the essence or heart of even the animals will, in some sense, continue to exist. See *ibid.*, 2:361.

[70.](#) Ibid., 2:452.

[71.](#) Ibid., 2:423. See also "The Mystery of Iniquity," in *ibid.*, 2:452.

[72.](#) Ibid., 4:298. The restoration of the understanding entails the renewal of the faculties of right perception and judgment with respect to the reality of God. See Don Marselle Moore, "Immediate Perceptual Knowledge of God: A Study in the Epistemology of John Wesley" (thesis, Syracuse University, 1993).

[73.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:298.

[74.](#) Richard S. Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness: The Theological Formulation* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1985).

[75.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:298.

[76.](#) Ibid.

[77.](#) Ibid.

[78.](#) Ibid., 4:298–99. In this same sermon, Wesley contends that prior to the fall, the liberty of Adam was complete: "He was at full liberty to enjoy either the Creator or the creation." See *ibid.*, 4:295.

[79.](#) Ibid., 4:298–99.

[80.](#) Ibid., 2:442. In his sermon "Of Evil Angels," Wesley gives us some

indication of the specific order, the hierarchy, that creation demonstrates, especially when he writes: "Rising one above another, first, inorganic earth, then minerals and vegetables in their several orders; afterwards insects, reptiles, fishes, birds, beasts, men, and angels." See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:16.

[81.](#) Ibid., 2:399. For a contemporary assessment of Wesley's doctrine of the fall of Adam and its implications for both the race and the animal kingdom, see Charles W. Carter, "Man, the Crown of Divine Creation," in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, 2 vols., ed. Charles W. Carter (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1983), 1:220ff.

[82.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:443.

[83.](#) Ibid., 2:508.

[84.](#) Ibid., 2:477. Bryant maintains that "Wesley seems to have held to a mythological explanation of evil, which locates the origin of evil in a primordial rebellion of creatures (Satan, Lucifer, et al.) against their Creator." See Barry E. Bryant, "John Wesley on the Origins of Evil," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 131.

[85.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:423.

[86.](#) Ibid.

[87.](#) For a valuable study of Wesley's understanding of temp ers, affections, and dispositions, especially as they relate to holy love, see Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989).

[88.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:299.

[89.](#) Ibid., 4:154.

[90.](#) The biblical texts that were often appealed to in the crafting of this doctrine included Genesis 3, Romans 5:12-21, and Psalm 51:5.

[91.](#) Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), 492–93. I have used the American Revision of 1801 for greater readability. The sense of the text, when compared to the English edition of 1571, is retained.

[92.](#) John Wesley, *John Wesley's Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (Nashville: Quarterly Review, 1984), 309.

[93.](#) Wesley did not utterly eliminate the matter of inherited guilt since he left such a reference standing with respect to Article II that reads, in part, "to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men." See Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:807.

[94](#). For a consideration of the doctrine of sin of Macarius, see Mark T. Kurowski, "The First Step toward Grace: John Wesley's Use of the Spiritual Homilies of Macarius the Great," *Methodist History* 36, no. 2 (January 1998): 113–24.

[95](#). See Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes De Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Hujus Temporis Haereticos*, 3 vols. (Ingolstadt: 1586–93).

[96](#). John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4:48.

[97](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:171.

[98](#). Ibid., 2:183. Notice that the language used by Wesley in this sermon to describe the carnal nature, such terms as "total corruption," "empty of all good," "filled with all manner of evil," and the like, reveals the basis for his criticism of such classical pagan anthropologies as those of Horace and Seneca. See Burton Raffel, trans., *The Essential Horace: Odes, Epodes, Satires and Epistles* (New York: North Point Publishing, 1983); and *Seneca, Moral Essays*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), vol. 1.

[99](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:183. Wesley's thought on the doctrine of original sin remained constant throughout his life. Compare, for example, the sermon "Original Sin," written in 1759, with "The Image of God," written twenty-nine years earlier: "Because if man be not naturally corrupt, then all religion, Jewish and Christian is vain, seeing it is all built on this—all method[s] of cure presuppos-ing the disease." The continuity is striking.

[100](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:264. See also Wesley, *NT Notes*, 397 (Romans 12:6); W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–IV* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95) vol. 21; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 14:253.

[101](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:432.

[102](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:190. Emphasis is mine.

[103](#). Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:456.

[104](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:194.

[105](#). See Augustine, "On the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin," in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, vol. 1, ed. Whitney J. Oates (New York: Random House, 1948), 583–657.

[106](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:242. Emphasis is mine.

[107](#). John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, 3 vols. (Bristol: William Pine, 1765), 2:1703.

[108](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:291–92.

[109](#). Ibid., 9:333. For an excellent study of Wesley's doctrine of original sin, see Craig Alan Blaising, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Original Sin" (thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979).

[110](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:404.

[111](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 375. See also Wesley's comments on Romans 5:19.

[112](#). Ibid., 376. For additional references to Adam as a federal head, see Wesley's treatise on original sin, in Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:333, 403, 404, 412, and 418.

[113](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:318. And in a passage that will surely offend contemporary sensibilities, Wesley understands the destruction of the Canaanite infants in terms of their guiltiness: "As for the infants, they were guilty of original sin, and otherwise at the disposal of their creator." Wesley, *OT Notes*, 1:721.

[114](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:316.

[115](#). H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 298.

[116](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:315.

[117](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:434. See also Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Nappanee, Ind.: Francis Asbury Press, 1996), 36.

[118](#). Nevertheless, many Calvinists were not traducianists like Wesley, but creationists, that is, they believed that God *creates* a fresh soul for each body.

[119](#). Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 29.

[120](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:332. For another passage that demonstrates that Wesley affirms the imputation of Adam's sin to the rest of humanity, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:335.

[121](#). See Wesley's letter to Dr. Robertson, in which he exclaims how original sin is "transmitted I neither know nor desire to know." Telford, *Letters*, 3:107.

[122](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:335.

[123](#). Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:350. Emphasis is mine. See also Ward and Heitzenrater's note number 60, in which they write: "The soul derives from the progenitor, i.e. *not* directly from the Creator. This view is known as traducianism, and is opposed to creationism. Wesley at first hesitantly espoused the creationist view, in his *Notes on Hebrews 12:9* (1755) and in his *Doctrine of Original Sin* (1757). The reading of *The True Original of the Soul* (see November 7, 1770) swung him over to traducianism, and he accordingly revised his *Notes on Hebrews 12:9*."

[124](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:282. Such a judgment, then, means that the

children of God can participate in licit sexual relations, marked by holiness and love, that are not necessarily despoiled by the very acts themselves, but can be received as nothing less than the good gift of God as well as the express will of the Creator, "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:22).

[125.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:464.

[126.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:176.

[127.](#) Ibid. Wesley points out that this passage originally pertained to "God's peculiar people," but he adds that "certainly the heathens were in *no better* condition." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:176.

[128.](#) See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:177–82; 4:154; and 1:212.

[129.](#) Ibid., 2:177.

[130.](#) Ibid., 2:178. I have changed the punctuation of this sentence to take into account the coordinating conjunction.

[131.](#) Ibid., 2:179.

[132.](#) Ibid. And when Wesley describes the abyss of sin into which humanity has sunk in its *present* condition, he repeatedly employs the same elements found here in this sermon and elsewhere: "However, therefore, men may differ in their outward ways (in which undoubtedly there are a thousand differences), yet in the inward root, the enmity against God, atheism, pride, self-will, and idolatry, it is true of all that 'the heart of man,' of every natural man, 'is desperately wicked.'" See Outler, *Sermons*, 4:155.

[133.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:456.

[134.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:154. I have modified the syntax of the verbals to accommodate the quotation. Emphasis is mine.

[135.](#) Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 50. Althaus indicates that for Luther, this self-curvature can be understood in terms of the bondage of the will: "We do not sin against our will but rather according to our will." See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 156.

[136.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:179.

[137.](#) On this head, Jeffrey Burton Russell writes: "The earliest Christian text making the equation of Lucifer with Satan is *Against Marcion* (2.10) by Tertullian (c. 170–220)." See Russell, *Darkness*, 43.

[138.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:179. Emphasis is mine.

[139.](#) Ibid.

[140.](#) Ibid., 1:665.

[141.](#) Ibid., 2:183–84.

[142](#). Ibid., 1:225.

[143](#). Ibid., 4:154–55. For more on the issue of depravity, especially as it plays on in a contemporary social and political context, see Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Poverty, Human Depravity, and Prevenient Grace," *Quarterly Review* 16 (Winter 1996): 343–60.

[144](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:156.

[145](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 11 (Matthew 1:16). Emphasis is mine.

[146](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:407. Wesley is careful, however, to indicate that total depravity does not undermine human freedom in terms of things of "an indifferent nature," as he puts it; instead, it affects our freedom for righteousness in the sight of God. See Wesley's *Remarks on a Defence of Aspasio Vindicated* in Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:350. For other references to "total depravity" in this treatise, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:197, 237, and 273.

[147](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:31.

[148](#). Ibid., 4:156. On this head, Wesley points out: "Hence there is in the heart of every child of man an inexhaustible fund of ungodliness and unrighteousness, [so] deeply and strongly rooted in the soul that nothing less than almighty grace can cure it." Outler, *Sermons*, 4:156.

[149](#). Ibid., 4:155. " 'The heart of man . . . is desperately wicked,' " Wesley writes. "In considering this we have no need to refer to any particular sins (these are no more than the leaves, or at most the fruits, which spring from that evil tree), but rather to the general root of all." See Outler, *Sermons*, 4:155.

[150](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:197. On July 31, 1739, Wesley wrote in his journal: "All our tempers and works, in our natural state, being only evil continually." See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:84.

[151](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 377 (Romans 6:6).

[152](#). Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, vol. 25, *Lectures on Romans* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing, 1972), 167–68.

[153](#). John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), 1:253.

[154](#). Ibid., 1:252.

[155](#). George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934), 275.

[156](#). William Ragsdale Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), 200. See also Cell, *Rediscovery of John Wesley*, 246.

[157](#). Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 51. Harald Lindström, for his

part, discerned a Reformed outlook. See Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1982), 20.

[158.](#) Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, 20.

[159.](#) Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 66.

[160.](#) Ibid., 74.

[161.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:176. Emphasis is mine.

[162.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:207.

[163.](#) Ibid.

[164.](#) Umphrey Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1936), 124–25. Emphasis is mine. And it should also be noted that Wesley used the phrases "natural man" and "natural state" in two distinct senses. This has led to much confusion in Wesley Studies among those scholars who have failed to appreciate the difference. On the one hand, in the sermon *Original Sin*, the natural state is depicted as exclusive of the grace of God. But as has been indicated above, such a person does not exist, for there are no people without divine prevenient grace. On the other hand, the phrases "natural man" and "natural state," which appear in the sermons "Awake, Thou That Sleepest," preached by Charles in 1742, and "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," preached by John in 1746, correspond to real flesh and blood individuals, not to theoretical constructs. See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:142; and 1:266.

[165.](#) Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 93.

[166.](#) On this theme, Hynson points out: "Privation theology, even that variation enunciates as '[depravity] arising from deprivation,' does not require the root of sin/eradication emphasis. The *heart* of the sin problem is privation; the *consequence* is depravity. The saving solution is not uprooting sin, but the fullness of the Holy Spirit." See Leon O. Hynson, "Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 78.

[167.](#) In his sermon "The Good Steward," Wesley strongly associates the grace of God with the Holy Spirit as revealed in the following: "Add, lastly, that on which all the rest depend, and without which they would all be curses, not blessings: namely, the *grace* of God, the power of his Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:286.

[168.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:207.

[169.](#) See *ibid.*, 3:545–52.

[170](#). Ibid., 3:203–4.

[171](#). See Outler's comments on his introduction to Wesley's sermon "On Conscience." Ibid., 2:479.

[172](#). Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 44. And Moorman notes that the Caroline Divines wanted to avoid the excess of both Rome and Geneva, "but the *Via Media* which they sought was not a compromise, a 'lowest common denominator'; it was a real attempt to recover the simplicity and purity of primitive Christianity." See J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church of England* (Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1976), 234.

[173](#). Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), 35.

[174](#). See Albert C. Outler, "John Wesley's Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 105; and Outler, "A Focus of the Holy Spirit: Spirit and Spirituality in John Wesley," in *ibid.*, 165.

[175](#). Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:493–94. Emphasis is mine.

[176](#). See especially Outler, *Sermons*, 2:156–57; 3:203–4; and 3:482.

[177](#). For a thorough discussion of these benefits, see Charles Allen Rogers, "The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1967), 196. Note, however, that I have added a fifth category, "the restraint of evil," to the four of Rogers.

[178](#). John Wesley, *NT Notes*, 363.

[179](#). M. Elton Hendricks, "John Wesley and Natural Theology [Prevenient Grace]," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 12. Moreover, Hendricks contends that "Wesley's approval of the natural theology of Bishop Butler is instructive and would establish *prima facie* a case for Wesley as natural theologian in the absence of any other evidence." See *ibid.*, 12.

[180](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:7. See also Wesley's piece *Predestination Calmly Considered*, in which he writes: "His first step is to enlighten the understanding by that general knowledge of good and evil. To this he adds many secret reproofs, if they act contrary to this light . . ." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:233.

[181](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:473.

[182](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:105.

[183](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:229.

[184](#). H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill

Press, 1940–1943), 2:104. In this context, Wiley has in mind principally Tridentine Catholicism.

[185](#). Ibid. According to Wiley, semi-Pelagianism sought to mediate between the two extremes, "it held that there was sufficient power remaining in the depraved will to initiate or set in motion the beginnings of salvation but not enough to bring it to completion. This must be done by grace." See *ibid.*, 103.

[186](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:29–30.

[187](#). Ibid., 10:392. See also "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty," in *ibid.*, 10:362. Article VIII of the *Methodist Articles of Religion* reads as follows: "The condition of man after the fall is such that he can not turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will." See Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:809.

[188](#). Charles A. Rogers, "The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley" (dissertation, Duke University, 1967), 17.

[189](#). Ibid., 91–92.

[190](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:157, n.3.

[191](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:285. George Croft Cell's work *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* is well known for having championed the thesis that Wesley's theology was similar in some important respects to that of John Calvin. See George C. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984).

[192](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:526.

[193](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 364.

[194](#). This is a distinction that Randy Maddox has drawn in his work *Responsible Grace*. See p. 89.

[195](#). For Wesley, the loss entailed in original sin concerns not only the utter corruption of the moral image but also the lack of freedom with respect to the natural image, its liberty, *in terms of salvation*, that is, *coram Deo*. See Outler, *Sermons*, 4:298.

[196](#). One of the true mysteries in Wesley's theology has to do with the self that is conceived apart from all grace and is, therefore, totally depraved. Lacking freedom, conscience, and therefore accountability, such a self, so it seems, lacks both subjectivity and agency, soteriologically speaking.

[197](#). Sovereign, free grace as used throughout this work, whether in terms of prevenient, justifying, or entirely sanctifying grace, refers not to the coercive,

deterministic activity of God, as in some theologies, but to the activity of God *alone* apart from all human working and in contrast to an exclusive, hegemonic synergistic paradigm. Once again, for Wesley, it is both/and, not either/or.

[198](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:207. Though prevenient grace (in the narrow sense), according to Wesley, involves "some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart," it nevertheless does not mark the beginning of holiness since salvation is yet to be carried on by convincing and sanctifying grace. In other words, the heart, though it has in some sense responded to the favor of God, yet remains under the dominion of sin. In fact, the Conference Minutes of 1747 addressed this very issue and determined that "men may have many good tempers, and a blameless life (speaking in a loose sense,) by nature and habit, with preventing grace; and yet not have faith and the love of God." However, without faith or the love of God, the actualization of holiness is precluded. See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:203–4; Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:293; Wesley, *NT Notes*, 366; and Telford, *Letters*, 6:239.

[199](#). Bernice Martin, "The Wisdom of the Social Sciences: The Self, Society and Popular Culture in a Postmodern Age," in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found: Wisdom in the Bible, the Church and the Contemporary World*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 219.

[200](#). See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1966), 173–84.

[201](#). Martin, "Wisdom of the Social Sciences," 225.

[202](#). Stanley J. Grenz, "The *Imago Dei* and the Dissipation of the Self," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 38, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 186.

[203](#). Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," in *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson and Robert C. Vaughan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 269.

[204](#). Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), 387.

[205](#). Ibid.

[206](#). Robert Webster, "Thomas Merton and the Textuality of the Self: An Experiment in Postmodern Spirituality," *The Journal of Religion* 78, no. 3 (July 1998): 387.

[207](#). B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 192. Emphasis is mine.

[208](#). Barbara J. Socor, "The Self and Its Constructions: A Narrative Faith in

the Postmodern World," *The Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 32 (1997): 2.

[209](#). See Jerry H. Gill, *Mediated Transcendence: A Postmodern Reflection* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1989), 3.

[210](#). Ibid.

[211](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:206, 208.

[212](#). John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:35 (Book One, Chapter One, Section One).

Chapter 3: Jesus Christ: The God of Holy Love Revealed

[1](#). And Deschner pointed out in his own age that Wesley organized his Christology along the lines of Protestant orthodoxy: the person, the two states, and the three offices of Christ. See John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985).

[2](#). Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 3:90.

[3](#). Ibid., 3:91.

[4](#). Ibid. 1:474.

[5](#). John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 226.

[6](#). John Wesley, *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1984), 306.

[7](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:99–100. Socinianism, which developed from the thought of Lelio Sozzini (1525–62) and Fausto (1539–1604), taught that Jesus is the revelation of God, but that God is merely a human being. Some scholars see in this movement the early strains of what later became known as Unitarianism. See A. J. McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

[8](#). Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978), 10:81. Emphasis is mine.

[9](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 203 (Luke 22:70).

[10](#). Ibid., 212.

[11](#). Ibid. Emphasis is mine.

[12](#). Ibid. Ever trying to discern a pastoral insight from his theological

reflections, Wesley observes with respect to unrepentant sinners that "the guilt of 'not believing on the name of the onlybegotten Son of God' lies heavy upon him. 'How (saith he) shall I escape, who neglect so great salvation!' " See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:478.

[13.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 212.

[14.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:91. Emphasis is mine.

[15.](#) Ibid., 3:92.

[16.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 212 (John 1:1). For a treatment that considers the relation of Christology to ethics, see Jonathan Sinclair Carey, "Wesley, Methodism and the Unitarians," *Faith and Freedom: A Journal of Progressive Religion* 45 (Autumn 1992): 102–12.

[17.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:457.

[18.](#) Ibid., 2:478.

[19.](#) Ibid., 3:91.

[20.](#) Ibid. Views that look askance at creation *ex nihilo* with respect to the role of God/Father face a further difficulty in terms of interpreting Wesley's theology since the English leader argued that the Son also has a creative role that operates *ex nihilo*. See Michael Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2003), 78–86.

[21.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:91. For more on the creating, supporting, and preserving activity of Christ, that is, on his nonmediatorial work, see Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 65–68.

[22.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:92.

[23.](#) Ibid., 3:91. Observe that this ongoing act of preservation is not only in accordance with the moral law, that fitness of relations established at creation, but also reflects divine sovereignty since such preservation is done "according to the counsel of his will."

[24.](#) Ibid., 3:93.

[25.](#) Ibid. For another reference to the Son's work as Governor, see "The Duty of Constant Communion," in which Wesley states: "God, our Mediator and Governor, . . . declares to us that all who obey his commands shall be eternally happy; all who do not shall be eternally miserable. Now one of these commands is, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' " See *ibid.*, 3:431.

[26.](#) Ibid., 3:94.

[27.](#) Ibid. And compare with "On Divine Providence," 2:542–43. Observe also that when Wesley refers to the innermost circle of providence in the sermon "Spiritual Worship," he indicates that it includes "only the invisible church of

Christ—all real Christians, wherever dispersed in all corners of the earth" (3:94). This kind of distinction, though slightly modified, was repeatedly employed by the mature Wesley.

28. Ibid., 3:94–95. Since Christ is the end or *telos*, Wesley encouraged prayer directly to him (and to the Father as well), especially in his notes on 1 Thessalonians 3:11. See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 528.

29. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:93.

30. Ibid., 2:428. Wesley describes this kenotic, descending movement in the following fashion: "What manner of love is this wherewith the only-begotten Son of God hath loved us! So as to 'empty himself,' as far as possible, of his eternal Godhead! As to divest himself of that glory which he had with the Father before the world began! As to 'take upon him the form of a servant, being found in fashion as a man!' And then to humble himself still farther, 'being obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross!' " See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:428.

31. Wesley, *NT Notes*, 213 (John 1:9).

32. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:479.

33. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:81.

34. Ibid. For many, the notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary lacks scriptural support. In fact, the Bible is quite frank in its discussion about the brothers (and sisters [in Matthew 13:56]) of Christ: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas in particular. See Matthew 12:46, Matthew 13:55, and John 7:3–5. Nevertheless, sometimes it is argued that the brothers of Matthew 12:46 are not the flesh and blood brothers of Christ but are just very good friends. However, such an interpretation, once again, from our reading, is evasive and belies the whole point of Jesus' question, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" (Matthew 12:48). The implication here, of course, is that the flesh and blood relatives, like Mary and the brothers of Jesus, are contrasted with those people who *lack such a familial relation*. But since the latter, as their chief characteristic, do the will of the Father, they are indeed judged the "family" of Christ. Moreover, the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary is also specious since it unduly elevated the status of Mary and because it eventually led to the creation of an atmosphere in which a full-blown Maryology could emerge, most notably in terms of the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception of Mary by the Roman Catholic Church in 1854.

35. Wesley, *NT Notes*, 51.

36. Deschner points out that Wesley rejects any adoration of the virgin but places her "in the ranks of ordinary believers from whom backsliding is an ever-

threatening possibility." See Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 264. See also Wesley's notes on Luke 1:47 in Wesley, *NT Notes*, 143.

[37.](#) Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), 488. Emphasis is mine.

[38.](#) Ibid.

[39.](#) Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 116.

[40.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:105.

[41.](#) Ibid., 4:102. And Wesley added: "And let it not be thought that 'the knowing Christ after the flesh,' the considering him as a mere man, and in consequence using such language in public as well as private as is suitable to those conceptions of him, is a thing of a purely indifferent nature, or, however, of no great moment." See, Outler, *Sermons*, 4:104. See also Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 116. And Maddox claims that "Wesley came right to the border of monophysitism, if not stepping over." See *ibid.*, 117.

[42.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:104.

[43.](#) Ibid.

[44.](#) Ibid. This sensibility is also present in Wesley's sermon "On Knowing Christ after the Flesh," in which he writes: "I have indeed particularly endeavoured, in all the hymns which are addressed to our blessed Lord, to avoid every *fondling* expression, and to speak as to the most High God, to him that is 'in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal.' " See Outler, *Sermons*, 4:101–2.

[45.](#) Ibid., 4:106.

[46.](#) Ibid., 4:102.

[47.](#) See Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 30.

[48.](#) Ibid., 28. That Deschner nevertheless still held suspicions concerning Wesley's estimation of the humanity of Christ is revealed in his following comment: "Somewhere in the background of Wesley's thought there must lie an attitude toward human nature, as such, which forbids him from taking with final seriousness the idea that the incarnation means an affirmation of human nature, not simply subjection to it." See Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 31–32.

[49.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 11.

[50.](#) Ibid.

[51.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:81.

[52.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:470. For an exploration of the connection among Christ, the moral law, and prevenient grace (universally given), see Kenneth J.

Collins, "John Wesley's Theology of Law" (dissertation, Drew University, 1984), 91–96.

[53.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:470.

[54.](#) Ibid., 1:202–3.

[55.](#) Ibid., 1:553. Notice the additional parallel that Wesley has set up here in his Christology. Just as the Son is active in creation, so, too, is the Son, like the Father, the "giver of the law (the Decalogue)."

[56.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 101.

[57.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 294 (Acts 7:35).

[58.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:9. Since the moral law is expressive of the divine being, it is also an apt portrayal of the love of God, the principal divine attribute. Charles Wilson explores the relations between love and law in terms of a significant "conjunction" in his "The Correlation of Love and Law in the Theology of John Wesley" (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1959), 99–115.

[59.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:10.

[60.](#) Ibid., n.28. Indeed, in his notes on this passage, Outler invites the reader to make a comparison between the characterization of the law in this context with the christological metaphors in Colossians.

[61.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 107.

[62.](#) Deschner wrote that "Wesley would vigorously oppose this suggestion, on the ground of Christological doctrine, and point to his assertion that the law is grounded in a created, not a begotten, order." See Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 107.

[63.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:9–10.

[64.](#) Ibid., 2:10. For an exploration of the law and grace dynamic that informs much of Wesley's theological reflection, see John H. Tyson, "The Interdependence of Law and Grace in John Wesley's Teaching and Preaching" (dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1991).

[65.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 102.

[66.](#) Ibid.

[67.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 540 (1 Timothy 2:5). One of the best treatments of Christ's work as *the* Mediator between God and humanity is found in the writings of Emil Brunner. See Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947).

[68.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 540 (1 Timothy 2:5).

[69.](#) Ibid., 540. Wesley also maintained that Christ as the Mediator "acts in all

things subordinately to his Father." But Wesley was quick to point out that "we can no more infer that they are not of the same divine nature." See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 430 (1 Corinthians 11:3).

[70.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 540 (1 Timothy 2:1).

[71.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 6:297–98.

[72.](#) Ibid. In a letter to his brother Charles, Wesley noted, "I shall say a word to the preachers in Ireland. I really thought Mark Davis had had more wit and more modesty. I do not yet find anything on the Atonement fit for a Deist." See John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4:281.

[73.](#) See Outler's introductory comments in Outler, *Sermons*, 4:149.

[74.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 6:297. "Give up the Atonement," Wesley wrote, "and the Deists are agreed with us." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 6:297–98. See also the treatment of Williams who contends that Wesley "places his central emphasis on the Atonement to make it clear that it is only at great cost that God has provided the grace by which we can be forgiven," in Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960).

[75.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:155. In his sermon "What Is Man?" Wesley engages in a little speculation and surmises, "Suppose there were millions of worlds, yet God may see, in the abyss of his infinite wisdom, reasons that do not appear to us why he saw good to show this mercy to ours in preference to thousands or millions of other worlds." See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:461.

[76.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 540 (1 Timothy 2:6). Emphasis is mine.

[77.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:553. Emphasis is mine. For some important secondary sources that explore Wesley's ransom view as well, see H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2 (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1940–43), 225; and Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 187.

[78.](#) John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, 3 vols. (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 1:85.

[79.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:427. See also Wesley's sermons "Spiritual Worship," in Outler, *Sermons*, 3:93; and "The End of Christ's Coming," in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:480.

[80.](#) John Wesley, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists* (London: William Strahan, 1784), 135–36.

[81.](#) William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference*

to the *Doctrine of Justification* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 208.

[82.](#) I acknowledge debt to Joseph M. Colleran for this perceptive syllogism. See Joseph M. Colleran, trans., *Cur Deus Homo* (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books), 27.

[83.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:228. I have changed the form of the verb to "appease" and put it in participle form to fit the context.

[84.](#) Ibid., 1:478. And in his "A Word to a Condemned Malefactor," Wesley writes: "If you could leave off sin now, and live unblamable for the time to come, that would be no atonement for what is past. Nay, if you could live like an angel for a thousand years, that would not atone for one sin. But neither can you do this; you cannot leave off sin; it has the dominion over you." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:180.

[85.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 3:352.

[86.](#) Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Nappanee, Ind.: Francis Asbury Press, 1996), 61.

[87.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 121. Note also that Deschner is correct in pointing out that Wesley rejected the idea that Christ descended into hell, and the Methodist leader, therefore, "omitted reference to it from his Twenty-five Articles." See *ibid.*, 50–51.

[88.](#) H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2 (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1940–43), 242.

[89.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:412. Emphasis is mine.

[90.](#) Thomas Langford, *Methodist Theology* (Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 1998), 59.

[91.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 26. Moreover, Richard Taylor, noted Nazarene scholar, argues for a penal substitutionary view and maintains that the governmental view of Grotius is inadequate: "If Christ's blood was not primarily penal in nature and directly a means of satisfying the moral and legal claims against the sinner, but rather merely a means of proclaiming God's wrath against sin for the sake of upholding moral government, then the correction between Christ's death and the Old Testament breaks down." See Richard S. Taylor, *God's Integrity and the Cross* (Nappanee, Ind.: Francis Asbury Press, 1999), 96.

[92.](#) Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 83.

[93.](#) Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1982), 73.

[94.](#) H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon

Hill Press, 1988), 372–73.

[95.](#) Ibid.

[96.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 71.

[97.](#) Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 286.

[98.](#) Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 79. And Williams also maintained that Wesley's doctrine of the atonement was the objective basis for his "optimism of grace." See *ibid.*, 88. See also Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 68–69.

[99.](#) Wesley, *OT Notes*, 3:2086.

[100.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:412. Taylor notes that great stress in the New Testament is put on the manner of Christ's death as a criminal. This underscores the truth that Christ at Calvary was bearing the penalty for sin, "imposed by man unjustly, but imposed by God justly." See Taylor, *God's Integrity*, 67.

[101.](#) Wesley, *OT Notes*, 3:2087.

[102.](#) Rupert E. Davies, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies, I: History, Nature and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 69. Emphasis is mine. See also, Outler, *Sermons*, 3:580–81; 4:78; and Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, *Letters II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 125.

[103.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 3:345.

[104.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 150.

[105.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 3:246. See also Wesley, *NT Notes*, 458 (2 Corinthians 5:21), in which he writes: "Who knew no righteousness, who were inwardly and outwardly nothing but sin; who must have been consumed by the divine justice, had not this atonement been made for our sins."

[106.](#) Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 69.

[107.](#) Brunner, *Christian Doctrine of Creation*, 118. Chester A. Pennington has made the case for the remarkable similarity, soteriologically speaking, between the theology of Wesley and Brunner in his "The Essentially Wesleyan Form of the Doctrine of Redemption in the Writings of Emil Brunner" (dissertation, Drew University, 1948).

[108.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:456.

[109.](#) Ibid. Moreover, Wesley clearly made a distinction between human and divine wrath in an early letter to his mother, Susanna, in which he wrote: "Only two rules it is my principle to observe in all cases: first, to begin, continue, and end all my advices in the spirit of meekness, as knowing that 'the wrath' or

'severity' of man worketh not the righteousness of God." See Telford, *Letters*, 1:138.

[110](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 637.

[111](#). Telford, *Letters*, 6:298.

[112](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 374 (Romans 5:9). In this context, Wesley observes: "Is not wrath a human passion? And how can this human passion be in God? We may answer this by another question: is not love a human passion? And how can this human passion be in God? But to answer directly: wrath in man, and so love in man, is a human passion. But wrath in God is not a human passion; nor is love, as it is in God. Therefore the inspired writers ascribe both the one and the other to God, *only in an analogical sense*."

[113](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:318.

[114](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 631 (1 John 2:2). Emphasis is mine. And as Wiley pointed out in his own age: "To propitiate is to appease the wrath of an offended person, or to atone for offenses." See Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:229.

[115](#). Wesley, *OT Notes*, 1:206.

[116](#). *Ibid.*, 1:331–32.

[117](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 370 (Romans 3:25). Beyond the numerous references to the term "propitiation" throughout Wesley's sermons, he also employed this language in his treatise "Predestination Calmly Considered," Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:225; "Thought on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ," Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:313; and "Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's 'Farrago Double-Distilled,'" Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:425.

[118](#). Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:246.

[119](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:186.

[120](#). *Ibid.*, 1:445. As this sermon clearly indicates, it is the human righteousness of Christ, both internal and external, active and passive, that is imputed to believers once they believe. Here Calvinists and Arminians are in basic agreement. For a biblical and philosophical assessment of the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism, see Jerry L. Walls and Joseph Dongell, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

[121](#). Schaff, *Creeeds*, 3:507.

[122](#). Richard S. Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness: The Theological Formulation* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 107.

[123](#). W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 146. Emphasis is mine.

[124.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:309. Emphasis is mine.

[125.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:202.

[126.](#) Ibid., 3:461.

[127.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:427.

[128.](#) Ibid.

[129.](#) Ibid., 2:411. During the Mass on Holy Saturday, before Vatican II liturgical changes, the phrase *O felix culpa quae talem et tantum meruit habere redemptorum* was a part of the service. We can translate the Latin as "O blessed fault which received as its reward so great and so good a redeemer." Echoes of *felix culpa* can also be found in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "O goodness infinite, goodness immense! That all this good of evil shall produce, And evil turn to good; more wonderful Than that which by creation first brought forth." See John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), lines 466–78.

[130.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:425. Wesley does not explore the philosophical implications of this thinking: is evil *necessary* in order for the greatest, most poignant expressions of the love of God to be displayed? Cannot God reveal the height and depth of the divine love in any way not, in some sense, dependent on the fall?

[131.](#) Peter Abelard and Rolf Peppermüller, *Expositio in Epistolam Ad Romanos* = *Römerbriefkommentar* (Freiburg im Breisgau; New York: Herder, 2000), 56.

[132.](#) Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 54.

[133.](#) Ibid., 54. Wesley's affirmation that the resurrection is the attestation of Christ's sonship no doubt drew upon the apostle Paul's teaching in Romans 1:4, which states: "declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 360 (Romans 1:4.).

[134.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:38. Emphasis is mine.

[135.](#) Ibid.

[136.](#) For more on the influence of German Pietism on John Wesley, see Ole E. Borgen, "John Wesley and Early Swedish Pietism: Carl Magnus Wrangel and Johan Hinric Liden," *Methodist History* 38, no. 2 (January 2000): 82–103; Frederick Dryer, "John Wesley: Ein Engländer Pietist," *Methodist History* 40, no. 2 (January 2002): 71–84; J. Steven O'Malley, "Pietistic Influence on John Wesley: Wesley and Gerhard Tersteegen," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 48–70; and Kenneth J. Collins, "The Influence of Early German Pietism on John Wesley [Arndt and Francke]," *The Covenant Quarterly* 48

(November 1990): 23–42.

[137](#). See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 613 (1 Peter 2:24).

[138](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:285. Emphasis is mine.

[139](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:38. Emphasis is mine. Observe in this context that the reign of Christ in human hearts is very much a part of the future eschatological rule of the Messiah who subdues all things unto himself. Indeed, there is no eschatological reign without it.

[140](#). Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 174.

[141](#). See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:456.

[142](#). Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley. The Library of Protestant Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 126. But Wesley *did* include this material, as it is properly listed in Outler's edition, when he published it as an extract, as a doctrinal summary. Moreover, the first edition of this published extract also contained the sentence, "He for them paid their ransom by his death." See Outler, *John Wesley*, 126, n.10.

[143](#). Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 75. I have changed the tense of the verb to fit the context.

[144](#). Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 72.

[145](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 11. One of Wesley's favorite texts (certainly in terms of preaching) for describing this inner rule of Christ in the heart was Romans 14:17, which states: "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

[146](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:352.

[147](#). It is the radical obedience of Christ, being obedient unto death, even death on a cross, that conquers sin, death, hell, and Satan. Deschner, however, maintained that Wesley gave no extended answer as to *how* Christ achieved this triumph. Our observation, then, is an inference culled largely from Wesley's observations on Matthew 27:52–53, Ephesians 4:8, 1 Corinthians 15:26, and Hebrews 2:14. See Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 121.

[148](#). Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.

[149](#). F. E. Peters, "Jesus in Islam," in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 270.

[150](#). Roelf S. Kuitse, "Christology in the Qur'an," *Missiology: An International Review* 20, no. 3 (July 1992): 355.

[151](#). *Ibid.*, 356.

[152.](#) John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 256.

[153.](#) Peters, "Jesus in Islam," 263.

[154.](#) Mona Siddiqui, "The Image of Christ in Islam: Scripture and Sentiment," in *Images of Christ Ancient and Modern*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 160.

[155.](#) David Fotheringham, "Jesus and Islam: Communicating Our Understanding," *St. Mark's Review* 179 (Spring 1999): 20.

[156.](#) James A. Tebbe, "Comparing Christ and the Qu'ran: A Brief Theological History and Assessment of Liabilities," *International Review of Mission* 88, no. 351 (October 1999): 414.

[157.](#) Ibid., 418.

[158.](#) Ibid., 419. See also Hans Küng's discussion of the Qur'an in *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths to Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1986), 110–12.

[159.](#) Tebbe, "Comparing Christ and the Qur'an," 420–21.

[160.](#) Siddiqui, "Image of Christ," 162.

[161.](#) Ibid.

[162.](#) James A. Beverley, *Christ and Islam: Understanding the Faith of the Muslims* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1997), 57.

[163.](#) Kuitse, "Christology in the Qur'an," 361.

[164.](#) N. J. Dawood, ed., *The Koran* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 23 (Sura 2:136).

[165.](#) Ibid., 5 (Sura 33:7; 42:13).

[166.](#) Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), 5.

[167.](#) Peters, "Jesus in Islam," 266.

[168.](#) Fotheringham, "Jesus and Islam," 23.

[169.](#) Dawood, *The Koran*, 81 (Sura 5:17).

[170.](#) Ibid., 102 (Sura 6:101).

[171.](#) Ibid., 219 (Sura 19:88). The Qur'an also intimates that the Jews attach particular significance to Ezra as revealed in the following: "The Jews say Ezra is the son of God, while the Christians say the Messiah is the son of God. Such are their assertions, by which they imitate the infidels of old. God confound them! How perverse they are!" See p. 136 (Sura 9:29–30).

[172.](#) Ibid., 216 (Sura 19:35).

[173](#). Ibid., 76 (Sura 4:157). And Kuitse adds: "The background of the rejection of the crucifixion is the thought that an almighty God cannot allow one of his messengers to die such a shameful death as the death of the cross." See Kuitse, "Christology in the Qur'an," 360.

[174](#). Küng, *Christianity and the World Religions*, 94.

[175](#). Stephan J. Moloney, "On-Going Muslim-Christian Dialogue," in *Muslims and Christians, Muslims and Jews: A Common Past, a Hopeful Future*, ed. Marilyn Robinson Waldman (Columbus, Ohio: The Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio, 1992), 108.

[176](#). Wesley, for example, on one occasion opined: "A little, and but a little, above the heathens in religion are the Mahometans. . . . And by all the accounts which have any pretence to authenticity these are also in general as utter strangers to all true religion as their four-footed brethren . . ." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:486.

[177](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:226.

[178](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:495.

[179](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:216–17.

[180](#). Ibid., 10:175.

[181](#). Ibid.

[182](#). Ibid.

[183](#). Ibid. For a defense of the use of icons from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, see St. Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, trans. Catherine P. Roth (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Valdimir's Seminary Press, 2001). The justification of the use of icons in terms of a doctrine of the incarnation, here as elsewhere, is actually based upon a specious argument. It makes the subtle and not-often-noticed shift from "person" to "thing." However, in its best sense, the doctrine of the incarnation, richly evident in scripture, helps the church understand, at least in some sense, the divine nature of the *person* of Christ, a divinity that is not implanted in objects.

[184](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:176.

[185](#). Ibid. For a defense of the use of icons (as part of the larger canonical "materials") from a Methodist theologian, see William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 75–76.

[186](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:177.

[187](#). John Wesley, *OT Notes*, 1:79.

Chapter 4: The Holy Spirit: The Presence of the God of Holy Love

[1.](#) Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 98.

[2.](#) Lycurgus M. Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 26.

[3.](#) Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 108.

[4.](#) Ibid.

[5.](#) Robert E. Cushman, *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989), 43.

[6.](#) Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 2:427.

[7.](#) Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1978), 9:455.

[8.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:143.

[9.](#) Ibid., 1:255. And notice that Wesley uses dramatic language on this subject of conviction of sin as revealed in his following comments: "But the moment the Spirit of the Almighty strikes the heart of him that was till then without God in the world, it breaks the hardness of his heart, and creates all things new. The Sun of righteousness appears, and shines upon his soul, showing him the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." See *ibid.*, 4:172.

[10.](#) Ibid., 4:123.

[11.](#) Ibid., 2:427.

[12.](#) Ibid., 2:410. Wesley makes clear that although this illumination is important, it must not be confused with the light of the proper Christian faith, as is evident in his following observation: "I allow, too, that the Holy Spirit enables us to perceive a peculiar light and glory in the Word of God, and particularly in the gospel method of salvation. But I doubt whether saving faith be properly 'an assent to this light and glory.' Is it not, rather, 'an assent (if we retain the word) to the truths which God has revealed'? Or, more particularly, a divine conviction that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself'?" See W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 22:203.

[13.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:172.

[14.](#) Ibid.

[15.](#) John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 271.

[16.](#) Ibid., 288.

[17.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 15 (Matthew 3:8). Wesley's full comments on this distinction are revealed in the following: "Repentance is of two sorts; that which is termed legal, and that which is styled evangelical repentance. The former (which is the same that is spoken of here) is a thorough conviction of sin. The latter is a change of heart (and consequently of life) from all sin to all holiness."

[18.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:327.

[19.](#) Ibid., 1:346. Emphasis is mine.

[20.](#) Ibid., 4:34. In his sermon "Satan's Devices," Wesley points out that the beginning of redemption should not obscure the truth that a greater work is yet to come: "The inward kingdom of heaven, which is set up in the heart of all that 'repent and believe the gospel,' is no other than 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Every babe in Christ knows we are made partakers of these, the very hour that we believe in Jesus. But these are only the first-fruits of his Spirit; the harvest is not yet." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:139.

[21.](#) Ibid., 1:162.

[22.](#) John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 47.

[23.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:107.

[24.](#) Ibid., 1:176. See also the importance that Wesley attached to the love of God, this time in terms of the moral law, in Charles Randall Wilson, *The Correlation of Love and Law in the Theology of John Wesley* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1959).

[25.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:82.

[26.](#) Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 25–26, *Letters I–II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980–82), 26:200.

[27.](#) John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 5:289.

[28.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 188 (Luke 17:21). For an excellent study of the influence of the Halle school of Pietism on John Wesley, see Sung-Duk Lee, *Der Deutsche Pietismus Und John Wesley* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 2003). See also Kenneth J. Collins, "The Influence of Early German Pietism on John Wesley [Arndt and Francke]," *The Covenant Quarterly* 48 (November 1990): 23–42.

[29.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 218 (John 3:16).

[30.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:224.

[31.](#) Ibid. For a view that discerns the "conjunctive" nature of Wesley's anthropology, a compound of western and eastern elements, see Seung-An Im, "John Wesley's Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Tension between the Latin Western Patristic Tradition (Augustine) and the Greek Eastern Patristic Tradition (Gregory of Nyssa)" (dissertation, Drew University, 1994).

[32.](#) Rupert E. Davies, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 527.

[33.](#) Ibid. In addition, Wesley observes that "religion does not consist (as they imagined once) either in negatives or externals, in barely doing no harm, or even doing good, but in the tempers of the heart; in right dispositions of mind towards God and man, producing all right words and actions." See Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:284. Emphasis is mine.

[34.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:98.

[35.](#) Ibid. 8:79.

[36.](#) Ibid., 8:85. This observation must not be taken in an antisemitic sense but as an affirmation of the Christian teaching that no one goes to the Father but through Jesus Christ. Evidence from Wesley's journal indicates that he was fond of Jews and attempted to learn Spanish so that he could communicate with a number of Sephardic Jews in Georgia. See John C. English, "John Wesley and His 'Jewish Parishioners': Jewish-Christian Relationships in Savannah, Georgia, 1736–1737," *Methodist History* 36, no. 4 (July 1998): 220–27.

[37.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:79.

[38.](#) Interestingly enough, Wesley maintains that during the apostolic age, the gift of speaking in tongues (which is often used in a different way by modern Christians as a "prayer language") "was an instantaneous knowledge of a tongue till then unknown, which he that received it could afterward speak when he thought fit, without any new miracle." See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 439 (1 Corinthians 14:27). See also p. 280.

[39.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:161.

[40.](#) Ibid., 1:286. See also Michael E. Lodahl, " 'The Witness of the Spirit': Questions of Clarification for Wesley's Doctrine of Assurance," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring-Fall 1988): 188–97.

[41.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:160.

[42.](#) Ibid., 3:77.

[43.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 4:117. For an exploration of the motif of real Christianity

and its importance for his overall theology, see Kenneth J. Collins, "Real Christianity as Integrating Theme in Wesley's Soteriology: The Critique of a Modern Myth," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 15–45.

[44.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 575.

[45.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 22:406.

[46.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:288.

[47.](#) *Ibid.*, 1:272.

[48.](#) *Ibid.*

[49.](#) *Ibid.*, 1:287. Wesley maintained there is a direct witness of the spirit, over and beyond the indirect one, because that is the "plain . . . meaning of the text [Romans 8:16], illustrated both by the preceding words and by the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Galatians; . . . the testimony must precede the fruit which springs from it." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:296.

[50.](#) *Ibid.*, 2:45. For more on the topic of enthusiasm, see Ronald Arbuthnott Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950); Umphrey Lee, *Historical Backgrounds of Early Methodist Enthusiasm* (New York: AMS Press, 1931); and W. Stanley Johnson, "John Wesley's Concept of Enthusiasm," *Kardia* 3 (1988): 27–38.

[51.](#) Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:5.

[52.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:60.

[53.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:23. See also H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 442; and William R. Cannon, "The Holy Spirit in Vatican II and in the Writings of Wesley," *Religion in Life* 37 (1968): 440–53.

[54.](#) Starkey, *Work of the Holy Spirit*, 142. Wesley also noted that one of his preachers named Hampson "lately made a discovery that there is no such thing in any believer as a direct, immediate, testimony of the Spirit." See Telford, *Letters*, 5:8.

[55.](#) Albert C. Outler, "A Focus of the Holy Spirit: Spirit and Spirituality in John Wesley," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 163.

[56.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:285.

[57.](#) *Ibid.*, 1:292. Herbert McGonigle demonstrates the importance of the language of the Holy Spirit in Methodism in his "Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8 (1973): 61–72.

[58.](#) Richard P. Heitzenrater, "Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity," in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990), 88–91.

[59.](#) Ibid., 89.

[60.](#) Ibid., 68–69.

[61.](#) See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:314 ff.

[62.](#) In his sermon "Free Grace," written on April 29, 1739, Wesley argues that "the assurance of faith which these enjoy excludes all doubt and fear." However, by the end of the year, as Heitzenrater aptly notes, this emphasis was gone. See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:550; and Heitzenrater, "Great Expectations," 81.

[63.](#) Earlier, in June 1738, Wesley had been thrown "into much perplexity" by a letter that maintained that "no doubting could consist with the least degree of true faith; that whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear was not weak in faith, but had no faith at all." Such a claim so disturbed Wesley that he immediately engaged in a round of bibliomancy and hit upon 1 Corinthians 3:1ff., a passage that soothed his mind—at least for the time being. See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:254.

[64.](#) Baker, *Letters*, 26:108.

[65.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:276. Emphasis is mine. The biblical evidence to which the Conference of 1744 appealed in substantiation of its position included the following: Romans 8:15; Ephesians 4:32; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 8:10; and 1 John 4:10, 19.

[66.](#) Ibid., 8:282. For helpful treatments on Wesley's doctrine of assurance, see Mark A. Noll, "John Wesley and the Doctrine of Assurance," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (April-June 1975): 161–77; Michael E. Lodahl, "The Witness of the Spirit: Questions of Clarification for Wesley's Doctrine of Assurance," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring-Fall 1988): 188–97; and Arthur S. Yates, *The Doctrine of Assurance: With Special Reference to John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1952).

[67.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:293. For a current treatment of the Methodist doctrine of assurance, see Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Assurance of Faith: A Methodist Approach to the Question Raised by the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Infallibility," *One in Christ: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* 22, no. 1 (1986): 44–61.

[68.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:293.

[69.](#) Baker, *Letters*, 26:182. Emphasis is mine.

[70.](#) Ibid., 26:246. Emphasis is mine. In an earlier letter to "John Smith,"

Wesley had maintained that "everyone that is born of God, and doth not commit sin, by his very actions saith, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God." See *ibid.*, 26:232.

[71.](#) *Ibid.*, 26:254–55. Emphasis is mine. It is also interesting to note that Wesley's thinking on the issue of assurance and real Christianity led him to conclude that "the Apostles themselves had not the proper Christian faith (since they lacked the witness of the Spirit, at the very least) till after the day of Pentecost." Such a conclusion undermines the argument, often made by some Holiness scholars, that the apostles were "real Christians" prior to the resurrection of Christ, such that Pentecost represents their entire sanctification. See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:291. Notice also that Wesley, in commenting on Acts 1:5, reveals that all true believers, not simply the entirely sanctified, have been baptized with the Spirit: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost—And so are all true believers to the end of the world." See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 275.

[72.](#) Baker, *Letters*, 26:575. Emphasis is mine. Observe, however, that Wesley slipped back into his all-or-nothing language a few years later in 1759 when he wrote: "Is He not still striving with you? striving to make you not almost but altogether a Christian? Indeed, you must be all or nothing—a saint or a devil, eminent in sin or holiness!" See Telford, *Letters*, 4:52.

[73.](#) Baker, *Letters*, 26:575. Emphasis is mine.

[74.](#) *Ibid.*

[75.](#) *Ibid.*

[76.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:161. Notice that, in this setting, there are echoes of Luther's *pro me* description of his own faith. For evidence concerning the several distinctions that Wesley made in terms of assurance (full assurance of faith, full assurance of hope, and so on), see Telford, *Letters*, 2:385, 3:161; Wesley, *NT Notes*, 575, 632, and 638; Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:32; and Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:375–76.

[77.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 3:163. Emphasis is mine. Nevertheless, not even this significant exception undermined Wesley's strong association of real Christianity and assurance. Indeed, a month later, in March 1756, Wesley wrote to Richard Thompson: "My belief in general is this—that every Christian believer has a divine conviction of his reconciliation with God." See Telford, *Letters*, 3:174. See also Wesley's letter to Mr. Thompson on February 6, 1756.

[78.](#) *Ibid.*, 5:358.

[79.](#) *Ibid.*, 6:95.

[80](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:35–36. Emphasis is mine. Wesley excludes justification and acceptance from the "spirit of bondage unto fear" that he linked with the faith of a servant in this sermon. Accordingly in his sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," he does not mistake sincerity in religious matters for acceptance, as is evident in the following: "A man may be sincere in any of these states [natural, legal, and evangelical]; not only when he has the 'Spirit of adoption,' but while he has the 'spirit of bondage unto fear.' Yea, while he has neither this fear nor love. For undoubtedly there may be sincere Heathens, as well as sincere Jews, or Christians. This circumstance, then, does by no means prove, that a man is in a state of acceptance with God." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:263.

[81](#). Ibid., 1:258.

[82](#). Ibid. Observe that the servants of God are awakened, but they see not a God of love, but One of wrath. It is, therefore, important not to confuse the issue of awakening with regeneration (and conversion).

[83](#). Baker, *Letters*, 25:575. Also note that, although Wesley eventually made the distinctions among freedom from the guilt (justification), power (regeneration), and being (entire sanctification) of sin, as evidenced in his sermon "On Sin in Believers," he continually maintained that even a babe in Christ has freedom from the power of sin. See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:314 ff.

[84](#). In addition, Wesley wrote to Dr. Rutherford in 1768: "Therefore I have not for many years thought a consciousness of acceptance to be essential to justifying faith." See Telford, *Letters*, 5:359. See also Starkey, *Work of the Holy Spirit*, 68–69.

[85](#). For two important references to Wesley's doctrine of full assurance, see Outler, *Sermons*, 3:549, and 4:36.

[86](#). Telford, *Letters*, 7:361–62. Wesley's response to Mr. Fleury, who had claimed that Wesley pretended to extraordinary inspiration, was to associate the witness of the Spirit (assurance) as vital to the Christian faith: "I pretend to no other inspiration than that which is common to all real Christians, without which no one can be a Christian at all." See Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:392.

[87](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:497–98. Emphasis is mine. For examples of what Wesley meant by "full assurance," see Wesley, *NT Notes*, 638; Outler, *Sermons*, 3:549, 4:36; Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 22:436.

[88](#). Robert Southey, *The Life of John Wesley* (New York: W. B. Gilley, 1820), 1:258. Emphasis is mine. That Wesley maintains that assurance is the *common* privilege of the sons and daughters of God suggests that it is rare when

assurance, marked by doubt and fear, does not soon follow the new birth.

[89.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 638 (1 John 4:18). See also Outler, *Sermons*, 4:37.

[90.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:550.

[91.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:215. Emphasis is mine.

[92.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:107.

[93.](#) William Arnett, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Entire Sanctification in the Writings of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1979): 23. In his candor, Arnett cites this material even though he takes a different position on the matter—one that links entire sanctification with Pentecostal language.

[94.](#) Ibid. And Wesley also proclaimed to this same congregation: "It was therefore for a more excellent purpose than this that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. . . . It was to give them (what none can deny to be essential to all Christians in all ages) 'the mind which was in Christ,' those holy fruits of the Spirit which whosoever hath not 'is none of his' to fill them with 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness'; to endue them with faith." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:160.

[95.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:236–37. Again, Arnett realizes that this passage is problematic for his position and observes: "Later in the sermon Wesley points out that these 'children of God' still have 'the corruption of nature,' or 'inward sin,' remaining in them. The problem is, of course, how a Christian can be filled with the Holy Spirit and yet have 'inward sin' remaining. Presumably, for Wesley, they were not entirely sanctified." See Arnett, "The Role of the Holy Spirit," 23.

[96.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:229.

[97.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 393. Emphasis is mine.

[98.](#) For the view that argues not only that Wesley employed a special Pentecostal terminology, in an almost exclusive way, in terms of entire sanctification, but also that John Fletcher was Wesley's "vindicator" and "designated successor," theologically speaking, see Laurence W. Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism: Rediscovering John Fletcher as John Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2002).

[99.](#) George Allen Turner, "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Wesleyan Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, no. 1. (Spring 1979): 67.

[100.](#) John N. Oswalt, "John Wesley and the Old Testament Concept of the Holy Spirit," *Religion in Life* 48 (Autumn 1979): 284.

[101](#). Wood, *Meaning of Pentecost*, 76. Robert Lyon offers a different view than that found in the scholarship of Turner, Oswalt, and Wood and writes: "From Pentecost on all believers receive at conversion the Holy Spirit as promised—in His fullness. No biblical basis exists for a distinction between receiving the Spirit and being baptized in, or filled with, the Spirit. The acts of the Apostles shows *au contraire* that they are interchangeable expressions." See Robert Lyon, "Baptism and Spirit-Baptism in the New Testament," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 24.

[102](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:163. Emphasis is mine. Here Wesley specifically links entire sanctification with justification in terms of their reception, that is, as graces that are instantiated, actualized in a point in time, whether that moment is recognized or not. King, however, argues that "contrary to more modern views of total and instantaneous sanctification, however, the effects of Spirit baptism can only be realized through a progressing life of human cooperation with such Divine purification." Such a view, however, fails to reckon seriously with the *qualitative* difference that entire sanctification makes since incremental, processive changes are ever ones of degree. Moreover, if it is denied that processive changes are actually ones of degree, then the qualitative difference that emerges must have a point of its instantiation. King's work, then, as with so many others, never treats *entire* sanctification (his paradigm doesn't allow for it), but only the *process* of sanctification, which all agree is an important part of Wesley's overall view but, we argue, does not constitute its entirety. Rob King, "Eastern Patristic Spirit-Christology for Contemporary Wesleyan Faith Practice," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 114.

[103](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:402. Emphasis is mine.

[104](#). *Ibid.*, 11:420. Emphasis is mine.

[105](#). In taking this position, we in no way diminish the importance of entire sanctification as an instantaneous event that is preceded and followed by spiritual growth, which cleanses the heart of inbred sin, and which fills it with love. The danger with the "Pentecostal" position is that it runs the risk of underestimating the value of regeneration, of depreciating the glorious state of the children of God who are free from both the guilt and power of sin and who have the Holy Spirit very much in their lives.

[106](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:37.

[107](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:424.

[108](#). *Ibid.*, 13:61.

[109](#). *Ibid.* For an extended discussion of the significance of the "full

assurance of hope," in Wesley's theology, see Yates, *Doctrine of Assurance*, 128–32. The most basic expression of this difference is that "the full assurance of faith relates to present pardon; the full measure of hope, to future glory" (p. 130).

[110](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 575 (Hebrews 6:11).

[111](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13:81.

[112](#). Ibid. Wesley was repeatedly concerned with the possibility of antinomianism at almost every stage of development in the Christian life. See Earl P. Crow, "Wesley and Antinomianism," *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 31 (Winter 1966): 10–19.

[113](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:442.

[114](#). Ibid., 8:77. [Section V 2].

[115](#). Ibid., 8:13. [Section 32]. John English has traced the influence of Norris on Wesley's epistemology in "John Wesley's Indebtedness to John Norris," *Church History* 60 (March 1991): 55–69; and Mitsuo Shimizu has offered a more extensive treatment in his "Epistemology in the Thought of John Wesley" (dissertation, Drew University, 1980).

[116](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:103.

[117](#). See Rex D. Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined: A Study in the Theology of John Wesley" (thesis, Harvard University, 1986).

[118](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:282.

[119](#). Ibid., 1:276. See also Don Marselle Moore, "Immediate Perceptual Knowledge of God: A Study in the Epistemology of John Wesley" (thesis, Syracuse University, 1993) and the earlier study, Yoshio Noro, "Wesley's Theological Epistemology," *The Iliff Review* 28 (1971): 59–67.

[120](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:283.

[121](#). Ibid., 1:442. Lee ties the perceptibility of grace exclusively to synergy or cooperation. This move, however, argues not only for a Catholic (actually Eastern) conception of holiness, but also for a Catholic conception of grace. It, therefore, fails to realize that divine/human cooperation is only one-half of the "conjunction," so to speak, and that the activity of God alone *sola gratia* also needs to be taken into account. George Croft Cell was much closer to Wesley's own meanings when he argued for a Protestant conception of grace and a Catholic conception of holiness. See George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934), 359; and Hoo-Jung Lee, "Experiencing the Spirit in Wesley and Macarius," in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 202.

[122](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:442.

[123](#). Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), 487–88.

[124](#). See Paul Freeman Blankenship, "The Significance of John Wesley's Abridgement of the Thirty-nine Articles as Seen from His Deletions," *Methodist History* 2, no. 3 (1964): 35–47.

[125](#). For the earlier Western development, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 269–70.

[126](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:373.

[127](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 259. Sometimes the ascription of personality to God is seen as an instance of anthropomorphism—of ascribing human characteristics and traits to the divine being. But actually the process is quite the reverse: God is the true person and human beings as creatures come to an understanding of the dignity of their own personhood only through the knowledge and love of God. For another example of Wesley's assent to the filioque clause, see his letter to Mrs. Cook on 3 November 1789 in Telford, *Letters*, 8:183.

[128](#). There are actually very few uses of the term "triune" in Wesley's writings. See "Thoughts Upon Jacob Behmen," in Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:511; and Telford, *Letters*, 6:253.

[129](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:101.

[130](#). Telford, *Letters*, 6:266.

[131](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:510. See also *ibid.*, 2:188; 4:31–32; 4:106; and Wesley, *NT Notes*, 16–17 (Matthew 3:17) and 151 (Luke 3:18).

[132](#). This is similar to the view found in Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 206–7.

[133](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:378.

[134](#). *Ibid.*, 2:377. Bracketed material is drawn from the sermon itself; that is, Wesley specifically mentions the creed "commonly ascribed to Athanasius" in this context. And in a Preface to an Extract from the Life of Mr. Thomas Firmin, Wesley writes: "I was exceedingly struck at reading the following Life; having long settled it in my mind, that the entertaining wrong notions concerning the Trinity was inconsistent with real piety. But I cannot argue against matter of fact. I dare not deny that Mr. Firmin was a pious man; although his notions of the Trinity were quite erroneous." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 14:293.

[135](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:378. My earlier work, "A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory of John Wesley's Practical Theology," *Wesleyan*

Theological Journal 33, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 164–84, reveals that Wesley's focus was indeed on the biblical language and the economic trinity.

[136.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:351.

[137.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:270. Wesley also notes in the sermon "On the Trinity" that Dean Swift wrote a tract on this subject and demonstrated that everyone who attempted to explain it has "utterly lost their way." Outler, *Sermons*, 2:377.

[138.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:384.

[139.](#) Ibid., 2:385.

[140.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 23:386.

[141.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:385. For more on Wesley's distinction between babes or children, young men and fathers, see Outler's note 32 with respect to the sermon "On Sin in Believers," in *ibid.*, 1:321.

[142.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 6:263. Charles Perronet was the second son of Vincent Perronet. Now it was Vincent Perronet to whom Wesley addressed *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* and who was sometimes referred to as "the archbishop of Methodism." For other references that associate the Trinity and spiritual experience, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13:59, 60, 77, 107, 112.

[143.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 7:392. In this letter, Wesley also indicates that Charles Perronet was the first person he was acquainted with who was blessed with the same experience as Marquis de Renty; Miss Ritchie was the second; and Miss Roe (Mrs. Rogers) the third.

[144.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:385.

[145.](#) Ibid. For an exploration of Wesley's doctrine of the Trinity in his more creative, literary pieces, see Seng-Kong Tan, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in John Wesley's Prose and Poetic Works," *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 7 (2002).

[146.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:203.

[147.](#) Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 88 (Hymn #7).

[148.](#) Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 49.

[149.](#) Ibid., 179.

[150.](#) Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 90.

[151.](#) Ibid., 143.

[152.](#) Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*

(Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980), 250.

[153](#). Ibid.

[154](#). See Wood, *Meaning of Pentecost*.

[155](#). Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 8. Despite the broad unanimity of this scholarship, it must also be noted for the sake of both accuracy and balance that other ways of reading this history are also in the offing. In fact, there are a significant number of Pentecostals today, especially within the Assemblies of God, who, as William Kostlevy carefully points out, "reject the notion that their movement has direct ties with Methodism and the Holiness Movement." Instead, the reformed tradition, or even restorationism, is deemed to be the appropriate roots. See William Kostlevy, *Holiness Manuscripts: A Guide to Sources Documenting the Wesleyan Holiness Movement in the United States and Canada* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 8.

[156](#). Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 118.

[157](#). Ibid.

[158](#). Donald Dayton, "The Limits of Evangelicalism: The Pentecostal Tradition," in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, ed. Donald Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 46.

[159](#). William C. McLoughlin, "Is There a Third Force in Christendom?" *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (1967): 47.

[160](#). Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 20.

[161](#). Dayton, "Limits of Evangelicalism," 47.

[162](#). Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 179.

[163](#). Ibid.

[164](#). Ibid., 109.

[165](#). Ibid., 207, n.1.

[166](#). See Myron Magnet, *The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 1993), 37–55.

[167](#). Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 22.

[168](#). Andrés Tapia, "Why Is Latin America Turning Protestant?" *Christianity Today* 36 (6 April 1992): 28. Though the authors in this edited series employ the language of "Evangelical" and "Protestant," the majority of these new additions are actually "Pentecostal."

[169](#). Ibid., 28.

[170](#). Tito Paredes, "The Many Faces of *los Evangélicos*," *Christianity Today* 36 (6 April 1992): 35.

- [171](#). Tapia, "Why Is Latin America Turning Protestant," 29.
- [172](#). David Stoll, "A Protestant Reformation in Latin America?" *Christian Century* 107 (17 January 1990): 44.
- [173](#). Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 156.
- [174](#). Ibid.
- [175](#). Steve Rabey, "Conversation or Competition? Pentecostals, Roman Catholics in Long-Standing Talks to Resolve Conflicts, Discover Some Commonalities," *Christianity Today* 42, no. 10 (7 September 1998): 22.
- [176](#). Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 8.

Chapter 5: Justification: The God of Holy Love for Us

- [1](#). Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 3:206, 208.
- [2](#). Williams points out that for Luther and Calvin, there are "two movements in justifying faith: (1) repentance and (2) trust in Christ." Wesley limits it to the latter moment of conscious acceptance of Christ, accompanied by a sense of forgiveness. In terms of the earlier Reformers, then, repentance works are not works done *before* faith but works *of* faith. See Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 64.
- [3](#). Rupert E. Davies, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 227.
- [4](#). Ibid.
- [5](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:397.
- [6](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:178.
- [7](#). Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 106.
- [8](#). Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 8:275–76.
- [9](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:205.
- [10](#). See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:511–12; and Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:70–73, and 256–57.
- [11](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:166.
- [12](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:70–71. Henderson's helpful typology (cognitive, behavioral, affective, training, and rehabilitative modes) illuminates

the formative power of Wesley's various class meetings. See D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing, 1997).

[13.](#) For a description of the instituted and prudential means of grace, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:322–23.

[14.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:519.

[15.](#) Ibid, 1:118.

[16.](#) Ibid., 1:126.

[17.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:275. Thomas Cranmer had developed a similar understanding much earlier in his "Homily of Salvation": "faith doth not exclude repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but it excludeth them from the office of justifying." See John Edmund Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1846).

[18.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:275–76.

[19.](#) Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:117. Wesley so feared a deprecation of works meet for repentance that he omitted Article XIII of the Anglican *Thirty-nine Articles* ("Of Works before Justification") when he prepared an abridged version of this historic document for the Methodists. See Paul F. Blankenship, "The Significance of John Wesley's Abridgment of the *Thirty-nine Articles* as Seen from His Deletions," *Methodist History* 2, no. 3 (April 1964): 35–47.

[20.](#) See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:363 and 14:193. In the latter, Wesley is simply reproducing the language of Augustus Toplady, the noted hymnist.

[21.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:544–45.

[22.](#) Ibid., 3:545. Compare with Luther's observation in his lectures on Galatians: "But now, since the Gospel teaches that the Law and works do not justify, but that faith in Christ does, knowledge, a sure understanding, a joyful conscience, and a true judgment about every way of life and about everything else follow." See J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann, eds., *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1–4*, Luther's Works, vol. 26 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing, 1963), 212.

[23.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:545.

[24.](#) Thomas C. Oden, *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 98.

[25.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:230. Emphasis is mine.

[26.](#) John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4:97.

[27](#). Ibid., 6:287. Emphasis is mine. The last part of this phrase—"But there will be always something in the matter which we cannot well comprehend or explain"—not only underscores the freedom of God in giving such grace, but also highlights its supernatural flavor.

[28](#). Ibid., 5:255.

[29](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:360.

[30](#). James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977), 2:121. Arminius did not view the temporal dimensions of free grace (as an utter gift) in the same way that Wesley did. To illustrate, for Wesley, free grace, the issue of faith and works, the activity of God alone, and the availability of such grace *now* were all interconnected. For Arminius, sanctification, to cite one example, was and remained a process, as is evident in his following observation: "This sanctification is not completed in a single moment; but sin, from whose dominion we have been delivered through the cross and the death of Christ, is weakened more and more by daily losses" (ibid.).

[31](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:230. Emphasis is mine.

[32](#). Ibid., 10:403. Wesley states that he "learned it [justification by faith] from the Eleventh and Twelfth Articles, and from the Homilies of our Church. If you can confute them, do. But I subscribe to them, both with my hand and heart." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:49.

[33](#). Albert C. Outler, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 84. For two very different views on the significance of John Wesley's Aldersgate experience, see Randy L. Maddox, "Celebrating Wesley— When?" *Methodist History* 29, no. 2 (January 1991): 63–75; and Kenneth J. Collins, "Other Thoughts on Aldersgate: Has the Conversionist Paradigm Collapsed?" *Methodist History* 30, no. 1 (October 1991): 10–25.

[34](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:118.

[35](#). Ibid., 1:119.

[36](#). Ibid. In a letter to Theophilus Lessey, Wesley defines the "faith of a heathen" in terms of one of the major restored faculties of prevenient grace, as is evident in the following: "To believe the being and attributes of God is the faith of a Heathen." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13:136.

[37](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:119. For information pertaining to Wesley's doctrine of the devil, see Outler, *Sermons*, "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," 1:306; "Satan's

Devices," 2:138–51; and "On the Wedding Garment," 4:144–47.

[38](#). Ibid., 1:120

[39](#). Ibid.

[40](#). Ibid.

[41](#). W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 18:247. Wesley's comments here, once again, highlight the significance of Aldersgate. Prior to this time, by Wesley's own reckoning, he had not fixed faith upon its proper object, namely, Jesus Christ. Wesley's Aldersgate experience, then, not only reveals a large role for the Holy Spirit in terms of the degree of assurance actualized therein, but also demonstrates a Christocentrism in that Christ, not a general understanding of God, is the proper object of faith.

[42](#). Ibid. For different estimations of the faith that Wesley had at Aldersgate, compare the essays of the following two works: Randy L. Maddox, ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990); and Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson, eds., *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

[43](#). Telford, *Letters*, 2:264.

[44](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:120. For an interesting autobio graphical reference concerning the faith of a devil and Wesley's own early faith, see Telford, *Letters*, 4:219.

[45](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:121. One of the more illuminating studies on the Anglican background that helped inform Wesley's own understanding of justifying faith can be found in Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification. English Evangelical Theology, 1640–1790: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

[46](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:121.

[47](#). Ibid. For similar descriptions of this kind of faith, see Outler, *Sermons*, 1:193 ff., and 2:160 ff.

[48](#). Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:69. This is a familiar theme for Wesley that orthodoxy, though important, is never enough. See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:220; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13:215.

[49](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:230.

[50](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:209–10. For a work that develops this theme of faith as "light," see Roderick Thomas Leupp, "The Art of God: Light and Darkness in the Thought of John Wesley" (dissertation, Drew University, 1985).

[51](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:177.

[52.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:304. I have changed the tense of the verb "to pour" from past to present in order to fit the present context.

[53.](#) Ibid., 2:161.

[54.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 7:361–62. Emphasis is mine.

[55.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:505.

[56.](#) Ibid., 4:298.

[57.](#) George C. Cell maintains that the "inner genius of the Wesleyan Movement was to redeem the current religion of the Church of England from humanism, to recall Anglican Arminianism to evangelical principles, and to restore the faith of the first Reformers to its rightful but lost ascendancy in Christian teaching and preaching." See George C. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 265.

[58.](#) Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 25–26, *Letters I-II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25:245. Emphasis is mine. Also in 1741, Wesley wrote in his journal concerning the views of Bishop Bull: "The position which he sets out is this, 'That *all good works*, and *not faith alone*, are the necessary previous *condition of justification*.' " Beyond this, Bishop Bull distinguished two justifications, not one. Naturally, it is only with respect to this last point that Wesley came to a greater appreciation of the bishop's views. See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:202-3; and Telford, *Letters*, 5:264.

[59.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 8:178–79. Although, at least by the mid-1740s, Wesley affirmed that there are two justifications—present justification and that which is to occur at the last day—his concern in this present context is only with the former. See Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:105.

[60.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:111. Emphasis is mine.

[61.](#) Ibid., 10:432. See also Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:50–51; and Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:106.

[62.](#) John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 518 (Colossians 1:14). Emphasis is mine. See also Wesley's letter to James Knox in 1765, in which the former points out: "You saw what heart-religion meant, and the gate of it—Justification," in Telford, *Letters*, 4:302.

[63.](#) Nevertheless, it must also be borne in mind, however, that Wesley, especially after 1738, gained a greater respect for the place of works of piety (means of grace) and mercy (charitable works) prior to justification, and he was, therefore, unwilling to discount them utterly since the *prevenient grace* of God

ever shines through them. Both of these judgments about the nature of works prior to justification, then, must be held together if an accurate picture of Wesley's theology is to emerge.

[64.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:128. See also Telford, *Letters*, 2:191; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:294.

[65.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:186.

[66.](#) Ibid., 2:187. A modern assessment of Methodist doctrine in Wesley's own form of "plain truth for plain people" can be found in Ted A. Campbell, *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999). For a more detailed discussion (and with the focus on United Methodism), see Scott Jones, *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).

[67.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:432. In answering objections to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, Wesley "follows Calvin almost exactly in his replies to similar objections in the *Institutes*." See William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 89.

[68.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:188. Wesley also maintains that justification is not "clearing us from accusation, particularly that of Satan," since this idea cannot be substantiated by means of Scripture. See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:187–88.

[69.](#) Ibid., 1:188. See also Kenneth J. Collins, "John Wesley's Theology of Law" (dissertation, Drew University, 1984), 141–52.

[70.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:188.

[71.](#) Ibid. In his notes on Romans 4:5, Wesley indicates that God can justify the sinner and yet remain "just and true to all his attributes." That is, Christ satisfies the justice of God, sin is remitted, and the great work of inward sanctification begins. See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 371 (Romans 4:5); and compare with the decree of the Council of Trent on justification found in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), 2:94.

[72.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:191.

[73.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 371.

[74.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 7:95.

[75.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:189. See Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1955), 125 ff. for an excellent treatment of the term "propitiation."

[76.](#) Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:51. One difference, however, is that

Cranmer wrote of Christ "fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly," language that Wesley omitted probably because it could be understood in an antinomian way. See Cox, *Writings of Cranmer*, 129. In the fall of 1738, Wesley began "more narrowly to inquire what the doctrine of the Church of England is, concerning the much controverted point of justification by faith." See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:21.

[77.](#) Justification, however, is occasionally marked by both doubt and fear in those who are but babes in Christ. See Wesley's comments on 1 John 2:13-14 in Wesley, *NT Notes*, 632–33.

[78.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:122.

[79.](#) Ibid. 1:124. Though Wesley does speak of "degrees of justifying faith," this phrase must be carefully understood. First of all, it must be realized that since justification occurs at the same time as initial sanctification or the new birth, a degree of justification, in Wesley's estimation, never falls below the prerogatives of the children of God, namely, faith (which delivers from the guilt and power of sin), hope, and love. Second, to suggest that justification can exist without the level or degree of sanctification just referred to is also to suggest that men and women can be justified while they remain under the dominion of sin—a clear impossibility in Wesley's reckoning.

[80.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:278. Emphasis is mine.

[81.](#) Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:176.

[82.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:454. What is less clear, however, is whether the internal human righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer. Wesley, for instance, never specifically states that it is imputed, although he does at times appear to use the phrase "the human righteousness of Christ" in a generic sense, and such usage would seem to include both the internal and external (active and passive) righteousness of Christ.

[83.](#) Ibid.

[84.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:215. Wesley maintained that several in his own Church of England were "either totally ignorant of the matter, and know nothing about imputed righteousness, or deny this and justification by faith together." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:461.

[85.](#) Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), 58. Emphasis is mine.

[86.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 3:372.

[87.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:277. And again, in a letter to Samuel Furly in 1757, Wesley underscores the same theme: "There is certainly no such assertion

in Scripture as 'The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.' Yet we will not deny it if men only mean thereby that 'we are accepted through His merits' or 'for the sake of what He has done and suffered for us.' " See Telford, *Letters*, 3:230; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:314–15.

[88](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:312.

[89](#). Telford, *Letters*, 3:230. Whidden, in one of the few articles on Wesley's doctrine of imputation, contends that Wesley held imputation and impartation together in his doctrines of justification and regeneration. See Woodrow W. Whidden, "Wesley on Imputation: A Truly Reckoned Reality or Antinomian Polemical Wreckage?" *The Asbury Theological Journal* 52, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 67.

[90](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:315.

[91](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:455. According to McGrath, "The assertion that justification or nonimputation of sin *without* the simultaneous assertion that righteousness is imputed to the believer, or with the assertion that justification is to be understood as *making* righteous, appears to be characteristic of the English Reformation until the late 1530's." See Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 286.

[92](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1: 457.

[93](#). Ibid., 1:455. One of the most extensive treatments of the dual threat of antinomianism, posed by both Moravianism and Calvinism, can be found in Earl P. Crow, "John Wesley's Conflict with Antinomianism in Relation to the Moravians and Calvinists" (dissertation, The University of Manchester, 1964).

[94](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:460. Emphasis is mine. And notice that Wesley denies that the Church of Rome, William Law, and many of the Quakers, Anabaptists, and Anglicans had a proper understanding of this doctrine.

[95](#). Ibid. 1:445. For additional references to the work of Christ as the meritorious cause of justification, see Outler, *Sermons*, 1:445; 2:342; Wesley, *NT Notes*, 376 (Romans 5:21); and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:390, 428.

[96](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:462-63.

[97](#). Ibid., 1:458. Remarkably, Wesley wrote about imputation in two distinct ways: on the one hand, he affirmed that it is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to believers. On the other hand, he also taught, perhaps taking the perspective of the believer, that it is *faith* that is imputed for righteousness. For example, in his sermon "Justification by Faith," he states, "Faith is imputed to him for righteousness, the very moment that he believeth." Elsewhere, in his

sermon "The Lord Our Righteousness," Wesley writes, "Faith is imputed for righteousness to every believer; namely faith *in* the righteousness of Christ." However, this second use, like the first, underscores the notion, so central to Wesley's doctrine of salvation, that men and women are justified not by works of the law, but by faith—a faith that points beyond themselves to nothing less than the righteousness of Christ. See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:196, and 1:458. Emphasis is mine.

[98](#). Ibid., 1:458.

[99](#). Chamberlain points out that John Tillotson did not stress the idea of imputation with respect to justification. See Jeffrey S. Chamberlain, "Moralism, Justification, and the Controversy over Methodism," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993): 661.

[100](#). Ibid., 673. And early on, Wesley had accused Bishop Bull of dissenting from the fundamental Articles of the Church of England, though his views on the bishop changed with age. See Baker, *Letters*, 25:600.

[101](#). Baker, *Letters*, 25:546.

[102](#). Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:153. Wesley at one point mistakenly argued that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was, to use Outler's own words, "a novelty in Anglicanism!" See Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 27.

[103](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:506.

[104](#). Ibid. Even though Wesley disagreed with Rome on this vital matter, his tone in his "Letter to a Roman Catholic" is very conciliatory, emphasizing a number of common elements: "O brethren, let us not still fall out of the way! I hope to see you in heaven." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:85.

[105](#). Schaff, *Creeds*, 2:112–13.

[106](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:140.

[107](#). Schaff, *Creeds*, 112.

[108](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:214. Why such statements of Wesley's have not been integrated into an assessment of his overall theological posture in the past is because they have either been outright ignored or in some cases subsumed under a reigning co-operant paradigm.

[109](#). Ibid.

[110](#). Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:321.

[111](#). Cannon, *Theology of John Wesley*, 248.

[112](#). Ibid., 116.

[113](#). John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 87–88. Charles Brockwell articulates the proper balance in his following observation: "Justification is preceded by repentance, a response to the leading of prevenient grace." See Charles W. Brockwell, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification [Bibliog]," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 30.

[114](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:178. Emphasis is mine.

[115](#). Baker, *Letters*, 25:541. Wesley also quotes Romans 3:20, the principal passage here, in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:20.

[116](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:196.

[117](#). Ibid.

[118](#). For many, however, there will be time and opportunity to repent, and so this marks the normal course. But repentance is not absolutely required, because, after all, one can be justified without it. But one cannot be justified without faith. The conjunctive style of Wesley's theology, then, is evidenced in joining together both protestant and catholic understandings of faith, "We affirm, faith in Christ is the sole condition of justification," on the one hand, and, "But does not repentance go before that faith? yea, and supposing there be opportunity for them, fruits or works meet for repentance? Without doubt they do," on the other hand. See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 7:281–82.

[119](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:162. Emphasis is mine.

[120](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 487 (Galatians 6:12).

[121](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:349. Interestingly enough, Wesley links the beginning of preaching salvation by faith to his Aldersgate experience in the following observation to "John Smith": "For it is true that from May 24, 1738, 'wherever I was desired to preach, salvation by faith was my only theme'. . . And it is equally true that 'it was for preaching the love of God and man that several of the clergy forbade me their pulpits' before that time, before May 24, before I either preached or knew salvation by faith." See Baker, *Letters*, 26:183.

[122](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:491. Emphasis is mine.

[123](#). Ibid., 3:119.

[124](#). Ibid., 1:118. For additional references to *sola fide* in Wesley's writings, see Wesley, *NT Notes*, 484 (Galatians 5:6); Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:281; Telford, *Letters*, 3:321; and Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:417, 454.

[125](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:176.

[126](#). Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 65–66.

[127](#). Ibid., 66. Emphasis is mine. Williams also maintains that justification has two movements: preliminary faith, which includes the free response to God's prevenient grace, and justifying faith *proper*, which is a sure trust and confidence in Christ. See p. 65.

[128](#). Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 49.

[129](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:290.

[130](#). Ibid., 9:114. One of the questions asked of all those who wanted to be members of the bands was the following: "Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?" See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:272.

[131](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:507.

[132](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:192. Emphasis is mine.

[133](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 477 (Galatians 2:18). Wesley's principal way of resolving the charge that the justification of the sinner was problematic, a legal fiction, was to connect justification to regeneration and therefore to the marks of the new birth, one of which is freedom from the power or dominion of sin. Simply put, one cannot remain justified in the ongoing practice of sin.

[134](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:275–76.

[135](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:35. Emphasis is mine.

[136](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:102. For a critical examination of Wesley's employment of the phrase, "the faith of a servant," and its relation to the doctrines of justification, regeneration, and Wesley's motif of real Christianity, see Kenneth J. Collins, "Real Christianity as Integrating Theme in Wesley's Soteriology: The Critique of a Modern Myth," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 15–45.

[137](#). Maddox, for example, argues: "Wesley stated explicitly that those who are servants of God no longer have the 'wrath of God' abiding on them! What can this mean, but that they are presently justified." See Randy L. Maddox, "Continuing the Conversation," *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (July 1992): 237.

[138](#). Baker, *Letters*, 26:254–55.

[139](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:497. Emphasis is mine.

[140](#). Beyond the basic logical error of affirming the consequent upon which so much of Felleman's argument is based, she also fails to comprehend: (1) the conjoined nature of justification (the forgiveness of sins that are *past*) and regeneration according to Wesley; (2) that justification must, therefore, be understood not simply in terms of the faith of a servant but also, at least in some sense, in terms of regeneration (and its standards, the marks of the new birth in particular); that is, one cannot be justified in the ongoing practice of sin; (3) that

the faith of a servant (in my narrow sense) will have to be rare or constitute exceptions and exempt cases in light of Wesley's own early and late affirmations that assurance is the *common* privilege of a child of God. See Laura Bartels Felleman, "John Wesley and the 'Servant of God,'" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 72–86. See also Kenneth J. Collins, "Real Christianity as the Integrating Theme in Wesley's Soteriology: A Critique of a Modern Myth," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 52–87.

[141](#). Ibid., 3:497. See also chapter 5, "The Doctrine of Christian Assurance," for more on the "faith of a servant," in Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 131–52.

[142](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:497.

[143](#). Ibid.

[144](#). Ibid., 3:498. As with the terminology "the faith of a servant," Wesley uses the phrase "fearing God and working righteousness" in at least two key ways: one that implies justification; the other that does not.

[145](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:58. See also Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:234–35. Notice also in the larger context of this passage that Wesley equates conversion with justification. Moreover, the evidence from Wesley's entire literary corpus indicates that his own claim, as well as that of contemporary scholars, that he seldom used the term "conversion" is not accurate. For some of the many uses of this term, see Telford, *Letters*, 2:202, 3:266, 4:40–41, 7:68; Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:16, 18:271, 19:158, 21:381; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:92.

[146](#). Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:107.

[147](#). Baker, *Letters*, 26:157. Emphasis is mine. See also Wesley's letter to Mary Cooke, in which he indicates that "*many* find Him rushing upon them like a torrent, while they experience the o'erwhelming power of saving grace." Wesley then goes on to consider Ms. Cooke's experience, which though still valid, de parts from that of the majority. See Telford, *Letters*, 7:298.

[148](#). Baker, *Letters*, 26:180. And Wesley points out: "I am acquainted with more than twelve or thirteen hundred persons whom I believe *to be truly pious*, and not on slight grounds, and who have severally testified to me with their own mouths that they *do know* the day when the love of God was first shed abroad in their hearts, and when his Spirit first witnessed with their spirits that they were the children of God." See also Baker, *Letters*, 26:158.

[149](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:342. Emphasis is mine. In addition, since Wesley

indicates that justification occurs simultaneously with regeneration and since regeneration itself is instantaneous, as indicated in the sermon "The New Birth," then justification must occur in a moment as well. See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:187, 198.

[150](#). Telford, *Letters*, 7:298.

[151](#). Ibid., 7:222.

[152](#). Ibid., 7:267. Wesley's dialog with Peter Böhler much earlier on April 22, 1738, raised the question of instantaneous conversion. Wesley considered Böhler's claim in terms of (a) Scripture and (b) experience and was convinced by these two evidences. See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:234.

[153](#). Chamberlain, "Moralism," 676.

[154](#). Ibid.

[155](#). Ibid., 671. Chamberlain illustrates this diversity of Anglican views by citing the work, once again, of Tillotson.

[156](#). Ibid., 676.

[157](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:316.

[158](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:169.

[159](#). Ibid.

[160](#). Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:332. Wesley's view on the resistibility of grace can be summarized as follows: "With regard to the Second, Irresistible Grace, I believe, That the grace which brings faith, and thereby salvation into the soul, is irresistible at that moment: That most believers may remember some time when God did irresistibly convince them of sin: That most believers do, at some other times, find God irresistibly acting upon their souls: Yet I believe that the grace of God, both before and after those moments, may be, and hath been, resisted." See *ibid.*, 19:332.

[161](#). Ibid.

[162](#). Ibid.

[163](#). See Clarence Bence, *John Wesley's Teleological Hermeneutic* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1982).

[164](#). Randy Maddox uses the image of a dance, with two partners, to explore the soteriology of John Wesley. Such an image, however, is unable to account for the freedom of God's action where there is no human action at all. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 151–52.

[165](#). Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1997), 38.

[166](#). Ibid.

[167](#). Robert Wuthnow, "How Religious Groups Promote Forgiving: A National Study," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 2 (June 2000): 125.

[168](#). Matthew Lundberg, "From Conflict to Communion: An Examination of Christian Forgiveness," *Word and World: Theology for Christian Ministry* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 295.

[169](#). Steven Sandage, Everett L. Worthington, Terry L. Hight, and Jack W. Berry, "Seeking Forgiveness: Theoretical Context and an Initial Empirical Study," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 21–35.

[170](#). Ibid.

[171](#). Yancey, *What's So Amazing*, 63.

[172](#). L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 110.

[173](#). Ibid.

[174](#). Ibid., 111.

[175](#). Halbert D. Weidner, "The Double Binds of Forgiveness," in *Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, ed. Andrew J. Weaver and Monica Furlong (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 74.

[176](#). Ibid.

[177](#). Barbara Brown Taylor, "Arthritis of the Spirit," in *Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, ed. Andrew J. Weaver and Monica Furlong (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 87.

[178](#). Weidner, "The Double Binds," 75.

[179](#). See Lisa M. Edwards, Regina H. Lapp-Rincker, Jeana L. Magyar-Moe, Jason D. Rehfeldt, Jamie A. Ryder, Jill C. Brown, and Shane J. Lopez, "A Positive Relationship between Religious Faith and Forgiveness: Faith in the Absence of Data?" *Pastoral Psychology* 50, no. 3 (January 2002): 14; and Neal Krause and Christopher Ellison, "Forgiveness by God, Forgiveness of Others, and Psychological Well-Being in Late Life," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 1 (2003): 77–79.

[180](#). Elizabeth Gassin, "Are Christians Obligated Not to Forgive? A Response to Martin," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 36.

[181](#). Lewis B. Smedes, "Keys to Forgiving: How Do You Know That You Have Truly Forgiven Someone?" *Christianity Today* 45, no. 15 (3 December 2001): 73.

[182](#). Donald Shelby, "Forgiveness: The Final Form of Love," in *Reflections*

on *Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, 69.

[183.](#) Michael H Collins, "Forgiveness: Removing the Roadblocks," in *Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, 152.

[184.](#) Hieromonk Damascene, "Resentment and Forgiveness," *The Orthodox Word* 38, no. 6 (November-December 2002): 280.

[185.](#) Ibid., 283.

[186.](#) Taylor, "Arthritis of the Spirit," 88.

[187.](#) Damascene, "Resentment," 284.

[188.](#) Margaret Hebblethwaite, "Forgiveness with Justice," in *Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, 96.

[189.](#) Lundberg, "From Conflict to Communion," 300.

[190.](#) Gassin, "Are Christians Obligated Not to Forgive?" 41.

[191.](#) Yancey, *What's So Amazing*, 45.

[192.](#) Ibid., 71.

[193.](#) Ibid., 11.

Chapter 6: The New Birth: The God of Holy Love in Us

[1.](#) Albert C. Outler, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 93. For more on Wesley's favorable valuation of western theologians as he considered the topic of holiness, see W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 19:294; and John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4:293, 8:218, and 8:171.

[2.](#) Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 151ff.

[3.](#) Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 2:163. Emphasis is mine.

[4.](#) Outler, "Wesley in the Christian Tradition," 85.

[5.](#) J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Conversion of the Wesleys: A Critical Study* (London: Epworth Press, 1938), 41.

[6.](#) Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), 54.

[7.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:309.

[8.](#) Ibid., 2:286. And the preceding year, 1767, Wesley noted that "by faith we receive the power of God in Christ, purifying our hearts and cleansing our hands." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:349.

[9.](#) John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 351.

[10.](#) Ibid. See also Outler, *Sermons*, 2:286. Note that prevenient grace is impotent in this context as well; that is, it is unable to carry on the great work that God wishes to accomplish in the soul. "For the preventing grace of God, which is common to all, is sufficient to *bring* us to Christ, though it is not sufficient to carry us any *further* till we are justified." Note also that Wesley continually uses the notion of prevenient grace not in a broad way, as some modern scholars suppose, but as a definite *kind* of grace. See Rupert E. Davies, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 64.

[11.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 4:332. Wesley also points out in this letter, however, that grace may be conveyed imperceptibly as well.

[12.](#) Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore, Ky.: Francis Asbury Press, 1982), 123.

[13.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:208.

[14.](#) Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962–1973), 1:254.

[15.](#) Outler, "Wesley in the Christian Tradition," 84.

[16.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:248.

[17.](#) Ibid.

[18.](#) Ibid. When Wesley first met Peter Böhler in February 1738, he recorded in his journal that this was "a day much to be remembered." See *ibid.*, 18:223.

[19.](#) Ibid., 18:250.

[20.](#) Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 42.

[21.](#) Outler, "Wesley in the Christian Tradition," 84.

[22.](#) George C. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 170.

[23.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:187.

[24.](#) Ibid., 1:431–32.

[25.](#) Ibid., 2:186. This language constitutes some of Outler's introductory comments.

[26.](#) This material has been culled from the sermon "The Great Privilege of Those That are Born of God," in Outler, *Sermons*, 1:431–32.

[27.](#) Though the Greek word that is translated as "again" can also be translated as "above," the context of John 3 seems to require the former since Nicodemus is actually contemplating what would be entailed in going back into a mother's womb.

[28.](#) Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 299.

[29.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:191.

[30.](#) Ibid., 2:193–94.

[31.](#) Ibid., 1:432–33.

[32.](#) Theodore H. Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 80.

[33.](#) Interestingly enough, Mortimer Adler accuses Locke of epistemological subjectivism in the sense that given Locke's representation theory of knowledge, in which ideas "represent" things in the world, in the end what the mind knows are simply its own ideas. Moreover, Wesley's view of the deeper understanding of the moral law looks more akin to what medieval theologians called the "intellectus," in which the intuitive powers of the mind come into play, than it does to any sort of empiricism, even when faith is rightly understood as a spiritual sense. See Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes: Basic Errors in Modern Thought—How They Came About, Their Consequences, and How to Avoid Them* (New York: MacMillan, 1985), 30ff.

[34.](#) Wesley used the terms "new birth" and "regeneration" in both a broad and a narrow sense. When he viewed regeneration as the salvific response to original sin, he tended to focus on the entirety of transformation in a very broad and inclusive way. For example, in his treatise on the doctrine of original sin, Wesley stated: "Learn from hence the nature and necessity of regeneration. (1.) The nature: It is not a partial, but a total, change. Thy whole nature is corrupted; therefore, the whole must be renewed." See Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978), 10:310. However, when he considered the new birth in a more narrow sense, in relation to justification, Wesley always viewed it simply as the gate to the larger process of sanctification as in his sermons "The New Birth" and "The Marks of the New Birth."

[35.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:507.

[36.](#) Ibid.

[37.](#) Ibid., 2:198.

[38.](#) Ibid., 1:442. For an exploration of the synergism of Wesley's theology, see Manfred Marquardt, "John Wesley's 'Synergismus,' " in *Die Einheit Der Kirche: Dimensionen Ihrer Heiligkeit Katholizitat Und Apostolizitat: Festgabe Peter Hein* (Weisbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1977), 96–102.

[39.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:442.

[40.](#) Ibid., 3:284.

[41.](#) Ibid., 2:490.

[42.](#) Clarence Bence, *John Wesley's Teleological Hermeneutic* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1982), 19.

[43.](#) Outler, "Wesley in the Christian Tradition," 93–94.

[44.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:190. For a comparison between a Calvinist and a Methodist understanding of the new birth, see Timothy L. Smith, *Whitefield and Wesley on the New Birth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1986).

[45.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:438. Emphasis is mine.

[46.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:185.

[47.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 7:77–78.

[48.](#) Ibid., 7:230. The circumstances of this correspondence were somewhat distressing to Wesley since Samuel, his nephew, had just made his way into the Roman Catholic Church, though he later had a change of heart. For additional references to Wesley's use of John 3:3, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:452, 459, 11:268; Outler, *Sermons*, 3:391; Telford, *Letters*, 7:231; and Wesley, *NT Notes*, 218.

[49.](#) Maddox writes along these lines: "the demand for a *conjoined* experience of initial justification and regeneration per se violates the basic point of the late Wesley's understanding of the faith of a servant." See Randy L. Maddox, "Continuing the Conversation," *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (July 1992): 241. However, such reasoning assumes that Wesley understood the faith of a servant in a monolithic way, not in the twofold way that actually emerges in his writings—a point developed in previous chapters. Once the issue of the "faith of a servant" is understood in a twofold way, then it becomes clear why Wesley repeatedly argued for a conjoined experience of justification and regeneration that would issue in ongoing liberty.

[50.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:180.

[51.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 4:229–30.

[52.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:449.

[53.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:148.

[54.](#) Ibid., 2:195. For a contemporary explication of the relation between happiness and holiness, see Douglas W. Ruffle, "Holiness and Happiness Shall Cover the Earth," *Quarterly Review* 19 (Spring 1999): 73–82.

[55.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:195.

[56.](#) Ibid., 2:196. Observe in this context that Wesley underscores the *power* or *dominion* of sin in the human heart apart from the new birth. But even with this glorious change of regeneration, unholy tempers will *remain* in the heart until the grace of entire sanctification is received; the important point, however, is that these tempers will no longer *reign*. For more on these important distinctions, see Wesley's sermons "On Sin in Believers" and "On the Repentance of Believers," in Outler, *Sermons*, 1:314–53.

[57.](#) Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 107.

[58.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:279.

[59.](#) John Wesley, *Notes Upon the Old Testament*, ed. William M. Arnett, 3 vols. (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 218.

[60.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:193–94. See also Wesley's letter to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester in Telford, *Letters*, 4: 382–83, in which he uses the same language.

[61.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:198–99.

[62.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:436. See also Wesley's sermon, "On Living Without God," in which he, once again, underscores that the new birth is not, and cannot be, a partial change. See Outler, *Sermons*, 4:173–74.

[63.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:279.

[64.](#) Howard Albert Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism as Renewal Movements: A Comparative and Thematic Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1983), 4–5.

[65.](#) Schmidt, *John Wesley*, 1:246.

[66.](#) Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 36.

[67.](#) Schmidt, *John Wesley*, 2:13.

[68.](#) Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 145.

[69.](#) Ibid., 60.

[70.](#) Ibid., 104. The emphasis here, as with many of the German Pietists later on, is on a holy life, not simply a past event, however momentous.

[71.](#) The first book of *True Christianity* actually appeared in 1605, and three

others were subsequently released in the 1610 edition, bringing the total to four books (*Vier Bucher vom Wahren Christenthum*) whose subjects included the following: Book 1, The Holy Scriptures; Book 2, The Example of Christ; Book 3, Humanity; and Book 4, Nature. However, toward the end of his life, Arndt added two more books (now *Sechs Bucher vom Wahren Christenthum*) in order to defend his position and answer some of his critics. See Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 5. Also, for the German edition of this work, see Johann Arndt, *Sechs Bucher vom Wahren Christenthum* (Philadelphia: W. G. Mentz, 1834).

[72.](#) Arndt, *True Christianity*, 21.

[73.](#) Arthur Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville: Publishing House M.E. Church, South, 1918), 143.

[74.](#) Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, in *A Christian Library*, ed. John Wesley, 30 vols. (London: T. Blanshard, 1819), 1:137–39.

[75.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:371, 373. The problem here, of course, is this: can it be assumed that "began Arndt," as recorded in the Diary, means that Wesley read some form—perhaps Boehm's translation—of *True Christianity*? Though Arndt did, in fact, write other pieces such as *Postils*, it seems more than likely, though not certain, that Wesley read *True Christianity* on the twenty-fourth, given the length of time involved and his later publication of this work.

[76.](#) Stoeffler appears to attribute some significance to the fact that *True Christianity* was placed in the *first* volume of *A Christian Library*. See F. Ernest Stoeffler, *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 203–4.

[77.](#) K. James Stein, *Philip Jakob Spener* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986), 39. For a detailed account of the influence of Stoll on Spener, see Martin Schmidt, *Pietismus* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1972), 43–44.

[78.](#) F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 238.

[79.](#) *Ibid.*, 235. For more on Arndt's influence on Spener, see Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, 3 vols. (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1880), 2:97–98.

[80.](#) Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 27. Interestingly enough, *Pia Desideria* first appeared as a preface to Arndt's *Postils*. However, because of the popularity of Spener's own work, it was soon issued in a separate edition in 1675. For the most part, the argument of the *Pia Desideria* is straightforward and moves from an

assessment of the corrupt conditions in the church—what Spener calls discerning the times—to entertaining the possibility of better conditions, and then finally to some practical and specific proposals to correct matters in the church

[81.](#) Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 99.

[82.](#) Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism*, 39.

[83.](#) Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 230. Schmidt also compares the relation of Luther to the Reformation with that of Spener to Pietism. He writes: "*Ahnlich wie die erste Phase der Reformation mit der Lebensgeschichte Martin Luthers zusammenfällt, bildet der Lebensgang Philipp Jakob Speners (1635–1705) für die Frühgeschichte des Pietismus den Rahmen und bestimmt weitgehend den Inhalt.*" See Schmidt, *Pietismus*, 42.

[84.](#) Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 17.

[85.](#) See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 417 (Romans 14:17); 382 (Romans 8:15); 275 (Acts 1:5); 40 (Matthew 11:11); 65 (Matthew 19:21); 169 (Luke 11:1); 408 (1 Corinthians 1:7); 547 (1 Timothy 6:6); 127 (Mark 12:34); 351 (Acts 26:28); and 49 (Matthew 13:28). For more on the motif of "real Christianity" as a theme that Wesley developed throughout his career, see Kenneth J. Collins, "Real Christianity as Integrating Theme in Wesley's Soteriology: The Critique of a Modern Myth," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 15–45.

[86.](#) Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:254–55.

[87.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:146.

[88.](#) Ibid., 4:57.

[89.](#) Ibid. Robert E. Cushman shows the relation between doctrine and the practical Christian life as Wesley understood it in his "Orthodoxy and Wesley's Experimental Divinity," *Quarterly Review* 8 (Summer 1988): 71–89.

[90.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:195.

[91.](#) Ibid., 4:124.

[92.](#) Ibid., 124–125. See also E. Byron Anderson, "Day of New Beginnings: Wesleyan Theologies of the New Birth," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 230–50.

[93.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:124.

[94.](#) Ibid., 2:483.

[95.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 8:12.

[96.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:365.

[97.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:200–201.

[98.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 7:217.

[99.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:92. Bishop Warburton made the new birth an

object of ridicule by claiming that the Methodists reveled in "storms and tempest, in cries and ecstasies, in tumults and confusions." See Telford, *Letters*, 4:382.

[100](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:332.

[101](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 218 (John 3:3).

[102](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:332. Compare this letter to Wesley's sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," in which he notes that "salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) 'preventing grace.' " This, however, does not contradict his earlier statements so long as it is realized that in the former, Wesley is referring to salvation, properly speaking, which always includes holiness; but in the latter, he is simply highlighting a "degree" of salvation, in that the sinner is at least on the way to holiness. In short, in no sense was Wesley arguing in his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" that those who merely have prevenient grace are in fact holy and are therefore redeemed, properly speaking. See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:203.

[103](#). John Wesley, *A Christian Library, Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue*, 30 vols. (London: T. Blanshard, 1819–1827), 29:482. For more on the theme of real Christianity as developed in the writings of Wesley, see Collins, "Real Christianity," 15–45.

[104](#). Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism*, 61–62.

[105](#). Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism and Methodism," 75.

[106](#). F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 12.

[107](#). Sung-Duk Lee, *Der Deutsche Pietismus Und John Wesley* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 2003), 160.

[108](#). *Ibid.*, 160. Lee also attempts to make the case that Böhler's soteriological thought was basically that of Zinzendorf in light of the latter's "dominating personality," and also in terms of an important meeting that took place between the two men. However, I do not find this claim to be convincing, for it is clear that Böhler's theological judgments can be distinguished, in some sense, from those of Zinzendorf at Gray's Inn Walks, for example, especially in terms of the question of the carnal nature remaining in a child of God. See Lee, *Der Deutsche Pietismus*, 188 ff.

[109](#). Lee, *Der Deutsche Pietismus*, 164.

[110](#). See Richard Paul Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists" (dissertation, Duke University, 1972), 504 ff.

[111](#). Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism and Methodism," 111.

[112](#). Quoted in Wesley, *A Christian Library*, 29:492.

[113](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:310. See also Outler, *Sermons*, 3:507. Emphasis is mine.

[114](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:332. Wesley's additional comment, "Let it be wrought at all, and we will not contend whether it be wrought gradually or instantaneously," does not detract from his basic position that the new birth is instantaneous; instead, it serves to highlight the importance of real transformation, a favorite theme of Wesley's.

[115](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:198. Lindström notes that it is "this combination of the gradual and instantaneous that particularly distinguishes Wesley's conception of the process of salvation." See Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 121.

[116](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:198.

[117](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:100.

[118](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:158. I have emphasized the words "moment," and "instant." The other emphasis is Wesley's own.

[119](#). Telford, *Letters*, 6:189. For two works that treat the gradual dimensions of Wesley's *via salutis* as a virtual paradigm that is deemed valuable to explore other aspects of his thought, see Michael E. Lodahl, "The Cosmological Basis for John Wesley's 'Gradualism,'" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 17–32; and Hoo-Jung Lee, "Experiencing the Spirit in Wesley and Macarius," in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 197–212.

[120](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:419. Emphasis is mine. Later, Wesley will clarify his teaching here and distinguish freedom from the guilt, power, and being of sin, especially in his sermons "Sin in Believers" and "Repentance of Believers." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:327.

[121](#). Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:248. Heitzenrater notes that Wesley did not begin to distinguish being saved from the guilt of sin and being saved from its power until the Conference of 1745. Note also that Wesley reveals in his journal that prior to May 1738 he did not have freedom from the power of sin. See Richard P. Heitzenrater, "Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity," in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990), 86; and Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 25, *Letters I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 575.

[122](#). Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 247–48.

[123](#). Baker, *Letters*, 25:575.

[124](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:322. See also Wesley's sermon "The Great Privilege of those who are Born of God," which was produced in 1748, in Outler, *Sermons*, 1:436, and additional comments in Telford, *Letters*, 4:155 and 5:322.

[125](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:10.

[126](#). Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:55.

[127](#). Colin Williams sees "great dangers" in defining sin in terms of a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. He much prefers to view sin in relational terms, as a "conscious separation from Christ." Moreover, it appears that the moral law as a norm or standard simply drops out in Williams's assessment of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection. But Wesley stressed the continual importance of the law at every stage of the Christian walk. The law leads to Christ and Christ leads back to the law; neither movement is repudiated. See "The Law Established by Faith Discourse I & II," in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:20–43. See also Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 178–181.

[128](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:420.

[129](#). *Ibid.*, 2:107. And in this same sermon, Wesley points out: "If therefore you would prove that the Apostle's words, 'He that is born of God sinneth not,' are not to be understood according to their plain, natural, obvious meaning, it is from the New Testament you are to bring your proofs; else you will fight as one that beateth the air." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:111.

[130](#). Telford, *Letters*, 3:169.

[131](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:436. Emphasis is mine.

[132](#). *Ibid.*, 1:439 ff. Wesley elaborates: "He fell step by step, first into negative, inward sin—not 'stirring up the gift of God' which was in him, not 'watching unto prayer', not 'pressing on to the mark of the prize of his high calling'; then into positive, inward sin—inclining to wickedness with his heart, giving way to some evil desire or temper. Next he lost his faith, his sight of a pardoning God, and consequently his love of God. And being then weak and like another man he was capable of committing even outward sin." Outler, *Sermons*, 1:439.

[133](#). *Ibid.*, 1:436, 438.

[134](#). See John Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

[135](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:341.

[136](#). *Ibid.*, 1:328. See also Wesley's notes on Hebrews 7:25, in which he uses

the slightly different terminology of "guilt, power, and root." See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 578.

[137](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:367. Emphasis is mine. For other references in Wesley's writings that a child of God has freedom from the power of sin, see Wesley, *NT Notes*, 38, 42, 258, 281, 369, 377, 454, 489, 500, 559, 613, 631, and 635; and Telford, *Letters*, 3:169, 171, and 217.

[138](#). It is interesting to note that even gossipers, when they repeat the faults of others, believe— vainly, no doubt—that they are genuinely doing good. They comfort themselves with the notion not only that what they say is true, but also that it is necessary to talk about such matters so that problems can be resolved or group integrity upheld. See "The Cure of Evil Speaking," in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:251–62.

[139](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:77. See also Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:136.

[140](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:276.

[141](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:419.

[142](#). Ibid., 1:330–31. Maddox has substituted his own language of "penalty, plague, and presence" for Wesley's "guilt, power, and being." Unfortunately, this choice of language fails to capture Wesley's basic understanding of deliverance from the rule of sin. Indeed, in Maddox's view, one is not liberated from the power of sin; instead, one remains under its dominion while one is being "delivered progressively from the plague of sin." Here, then, a clear mark of a child of God has been lost in a soteriology of incremental development. See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:327; and Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 143.

[143](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:332.

[144](#). William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 132. And Cannon affirms Wesley's standard of the new birth in the following fashion: "It means that in Wesleyan thought an evil deed is of such profound significance and is considered with such horror that, for a man actually to be able to commit it, he must strangle the faith that is in him and drive the love of God from his breast" (p. 139).

[145](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 4:35.

[146](#). Randy L. Maddox, "Continuing the Conversation," *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (July 1992): 237.

[147](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 107 (Matthew 11:28). Emphasis is mine. In this context, Wesley is thinking not of entire but initial sanctification.

[148](#). Ibid., 477 (Galatians 2:18).

[149](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:368. Emphasis is mine.

[150](#). Ibid., 10:367. Emphasis is mine.

[151](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 5:152. Emphasis is mine.

[152](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:230. Emphasis is mine.

[153](#). Ibid., 6:217. See also Kenneth J. Collins, "A Reply to Randy Maddox," *Methodist History* 31, no. 1 (October 1992): 51–54, which forms the other half of the conversation with respect to Maddox's article "Continuing the Conversation," cited earlier.

[154](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:454. Emphasis is mine.

[155](#). Ibid., 4:26. Emphasis is mine.

[156](#). Ibid., 4:157. Brackets in the original.

[157](#). Maddox, for instance, accuses Wesley of verging on Donatism for insisting that believers, who are free from the power or dominion of sin, cease to be redeemed or holy when they commit sin. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 164.

[158](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:375.

[159](#). Ibid., 10:369.

[160](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:427.

[161](#). Ibid., 1:425. The second mark of a child of God, namely hope, has already been treated in the chapter on the Holy Spirit under the heading of assurance.

[162](#). Ibid., 3:313–14.

[163](#). Though there is no evidence that Wesley ever read St. Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*, the central images that both spiritual leaders use to describe the Christian life are remarkably similar. Both, for instance, employ paradigmatic metaphors that not only contain implicit value judgments, but also highlight the crucial nature of love. For example, Teresa's seventh mansion and its "geographical" location in the center of the castle is analogous to Wesley's placing of love on the throne from which all else in the Christian life flows. Compare Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 206 ff.; with Outler, *Sermons*, 3:313–14.

[164](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:320.

[165](#). Ibid., 3:305.

[166](#). Ibid., 4:223. The danger of beginning not with love and holy tempers but with political and economic concerns is that "justice" so conceived will most likely be unreformed and speckled with anger, class animosity, and perhaps even

outright hatred of the middle class or the rich. In other words, its concern for the poor will be expressed in all those unholy tempers against which Wesley inveighed. Once again, love and holiness are the proper starting point. Only then will the poor be properly ministered to and receive the justice they deserve.

[167.](#) Sara Savage, "A Psychology of Conversion from All Angles," in *Previous Convictions: Conversion in the Present Day*, ed. Martyn Percy (London: SPCK, 2000), 1.

[168.](#) Kristin Swenson-Mendez, "Religious Conversion: A Filmic Representation," *Religious Studies and Theology* 19, no. 2 (December 2000): 54.

[169.](#) John E. Smith, "The Concept of Conversion," in *Conversion—Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, ed. Walter E. Conn (New York: Alba House, 1978), 51. Bracketed material is mine.

[170.](#) E. Stanley Jones, *Conversion* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), 46.

[171.](#) Bernard Lonergan, "Theology in Its New Context, the Dimensions of Conversion," in *Conversion—Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, 18.

[172.](#) Ibid., 18.

[173.](#) Jones, *Conversion*, 42.

[174.](#) Arthur Canales, "A Rebirth of Being 'Born-Again': Theological, Sacramental and Pastoral Reflections from a Roman Catholic Perspective," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11, no. 1 (October 2002): 113. Though the Greek word that translates *again* can also be used to translate the term "above," the phrase "born again" is required by the *context* since Nicodemus is actually pondering what it would be like to reenter a mother's womb.

[175.](#) J. Jayakiran Sebastian, "Conversion and Its Discontents," *Bangalore Theological Forum* 32, no. 1 (June 2000): 170.

[176.](#) William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex UK: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1982), 162.

[177.](#) Ibid., 167.

[178.](#) Jones, *Conversion*, 27. For a consideration of the theme of conversion in the Wesleyan tradition, see Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson, eds., *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

[179.](#) James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 165.

[180.](#) Ibid.

[181.](#) David Bebbington, "Evangelical Conversion, C. 1740–1850," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2000): 118.

[182.](#) Savage, "Psychology of Conversion," 5. But since many researchers of

theological conversions, and those who write about it, are middle-aged, this factor alone may suggest not only a vague familiarity with the subject, but also a possible interest in just how data is read and interpreted.

[183](#). Jones, *Conversion*, 31.

[184](#). Ibid., 2.

[185](#). Canales, "Rebirth," 99.

[186](#). Ibid., 104. Emphasis is mine.

[187](#). Ibid., 107.

[188](#). Ibid., 115.

[189](#). Ibid., 113. The priest Hans Küng maintains Roman Catholic sensitivities while he considers the insights of a more ecumenical context in his "Christian Conversion," in *Conversion—Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, 273–77.

[190](#). Canales, "Rebirth," 115.

[191](#). Ibid., 118.

[192](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:428–29.

Chapter 7: The Church and the Means of Grace: The Community of Holy Love

[1](#). Scott Jones, *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 246.

[2](#). Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 3:46.

[3](#). Ibid.

[4](#). Ibid., 3:48.

[5](#). John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmuel Publishing, 1975), 592 (Hebrews 12:22).

[6](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:50.

[7](#). Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), 499. In his treatise *On the Councils and Churches* (1539), as Avery Dulles points out, Luther expanded this to seven notes: "1. The preaching of the true word of God 2. The proper administration of baptism 3. The correct form of the Lord's Supper 4. The power of the keys 5. The lawful vocation and ordination of ministers 6. Prayer and the singing of psalms in the vernacular 7. Persecutions." See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New

York: Image Books, 1978), 125.

[8.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:52.

[9.](#) Ibid., 3:45.

[10.](#) Ibid., 3:55–56. And Wesley rejected the "primacy" of Peter, a claim often tied to the substantiation of the papacy in his comments on Acts 15:23, "The whole conduct of this affair plainly shows that the Church in those days had no conception of St. Peter's primacy, or of his being the chief judge in controversies." See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 318 (Acts 15:23).

[11.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:47.

[12.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 287 (Acts 5:10).

[13.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:46. Dulles offers a number of models in which to explore the doctrine of the church: (1) Institution, (2) Mystical Communion, (3) Sacrament, (4) Herald, and (5) Servant. See Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 34–102.

[14.](#) Howard Albert Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism as Renewal Movements: A Comparative and Thematic Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Notre Dame, 1983), 238.

[15.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:469.

[16.](#) Ibid., 2:461.

[17.](#) Ibid.

[18.](#) Ibid., 2:457.

[19.](#) Ibid., 3:450. In his sermon "The Mystery of Iniquity," Wesley remarks that "persecution never did, never could give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:462–63.

[20.](#) Ibid., 3:450.

[21.](#) Ibid., 2:464.

[22.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 535 (1 Thessalonians 2:7). For a basic understanding of Wesley's reading of history in contrast to that of the historians of the Enlightenment, see Ken MacMillan, "John Wesley and the Enlightened Historians," *Methodist History* 38, no. 2 (January 2000): 121–32.

[23.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:470.

[24.](#) Ibid., 4:95. Emphasis is mine.

[25.](#) Ibid., 2:468.

[26.](#) See Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990).

[27.](#) J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 123.

[28.](#) Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978), 11:53.

[29.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:179.

[30.](#) Ibid., 4:11.

[31.](#) Ibid.

[32.](#) Ibid. 3:241.

[33.](#) Ibid. For a "Marxist" reading of Wesley's economics, and one that questions the right to private property, see Jennings, *Good News to the Poor*, 98.

[34.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:521–22.

[35.](#) Ibid., 3:523.

[36.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:300.

[37.](#) Ibid.

[38.](#) Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 276.

[39.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:452–53.

[40.](#) Rupert E. Davies, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies I: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 538.

[41.](#) Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 25–26, *Letters I–II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25:209.

[42.](#) Ibid., 25:400. For other critical references to Constantine, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 6:261; 7:26, 164, and 276.

[43.](#) Part of the problem with some contemporary assessments of Wesley's doctrine of regeneration is that the Methodist leader's understanding of the degrees of this work of grace is refashioned, with the result that regeneration is linked, at its minimum, not with the new birth, as it should be, but with prevenient grace. Here the concept of regeneration becomes so broad that it even includes the initial restoring activity of grace, the awakening of faculties, in terms of unrepentant sinners. To illustrate, Randy Maddox, who is typical of this scholarship, writes: "Wesley came to emphasize that there was a crucial degree of regeneration prior to the New Birth: the universal nascent regenerating effect of prevenient grace." John Wesley, although he did indeed postulate degrees of regeneration, linked its lowest degree not with prevenient grace, as is sometimes supposed, but with the new birth and with power over sin—characteristics that do not typify the unawakened sinner. See Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 159. For Wesley's description of degrees of regeneration, see Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:64; Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:421; W. Reginald Ward and Richard

P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 19:32; and Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley, The Library of Protestant Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 140.

[44.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:572–73. Compare John Wesley's estimation of inward religion and its linkage to real Christianity with Jennings's virtual abandonment of this linkage as expressed in his piece "John Wesley Against Aldersgate." See Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "John Wesley against Aldersgate," *Quarterly Review* 8 (Fall 1988): 3–22.

[45.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:501. See also 3:152.

[46.](#) Ibid., 3:152. A few years earlier, in 1780, Wesley strongly associated real Christianity and happiness. In his sermon "Spiritual Worship," for example, he declares: "none but a Christian is happy; none but a real, inward Christian." See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:99.

[47.](#) John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 7:331.

[48.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:453. See also Wesley's "Thoughts on a Late Phenomenon," in which he reveals that the goal of the Oxford Methodists was to be "scriptural Christians." See Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:535.

[49.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:299.

[50.](#) David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 33.

[51.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 20:356.

[52.](#) Ibid.

[53.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:453. Emphasis is mine.

[54.](#) Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 52.

[55.](#) Kelly D. Carter, "The High Church Roots of Wesley's Appeal to Primitive Christianity," *Restoration Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (June 23, 2005): 8.

[56.](#) Ibid., 9.

[57.](#) Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism," 120.

[58.](#) Ibid., 121.

[59.](#) Ibid., 72. Snyder offers seven frameworks to explore the structure of renewal movements, ranging from *ecclesiola in ecclesia* to Catholic/Anabaptist typology. See 11 ff.

[60.](#) Ibid., 15. Brown, however, sees the creation of the *collegia* simply as an "extension of the values derived from his [Spener's] catechetical activities." See

Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 61.

[61.](#) K. James Stein, *Philip Jakob Spener* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986), 87; and Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, 3 vols. (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1880), 2:135.

[62.](#) Wilda Morris, "Philipp Jakob Spener: Continuing the Reformation," *The Covenant Quarterly* 38 (February 1980): 15.

[63.](#) Stein, *Spener*, 90.

[64.](#) Ibid. Snyder suggests three reasons why Spener's *collegia* were perceived as a threat: first, they elevated the role of the laity; second, they altered local church structure (*collegium presbyterorum*); and third, they tended to substitute the meeting for the confessional. See Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism," 71.

[65.](#) Stein, *Spener*, 92. See Ritschl, "Philipp Jakob Spener: Seine theologische und kirchliche Stellung," in *Geschichte der Pietismus*, 2:97–124. And for the source of the pietistic pastoral ideal, see Martin Schmidt, *Der Pietismus Als Theologische Erscheinung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 122 ff, "Das pietistische Pfarrerrideal und seine altkirchen Wurzeln."

[66.](#) D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing, 1997), 112.

[67.](#) And though, as Snyder correctly points out, Wesley did not specifically draw on the Pietist *ecclesiola* model, he nevertheless considered Methodism as an *ecclesiola*. See Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism," 261.

[68.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:90.

[69.](#) Ibid.

[70.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:424.

[71.](#) Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:69.

[72.](#) Ibid.

[73.](#) Ibid., 9:261.

[74.](#) Ibid. And later in his career, Wesley pointed out: "I cannot allow John Sellars to be any longer a leader; but if he will lead the class, whether I will or no, I require you to put him out of the Society. If twenty of his class will leave the Society too, they must. The first loss is the best. Better forty members should be lost than our discipline lost. They are no Methodists that will bear no restraints. Explain this at large to the Society." See Telford, *Letters*, 7:101.

[75.](#) For more on how Wesley "pruned" the class meetings, see Charles E. White, "John Wesley's Use of Church Discipline," *Methodist History* 29 (1991):

112–18.

[76.](#) Henderson, *Wesley's Class Meeting*, 47.

[77.](#) Ibid.

[78.](#) In this context, such directions likely refer to evangelical not legal repentance. In other words, those in the bands were likely repenting of the carnal nature itself.

[79.](#) Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:79.

[80.](#) Snyder, "Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism," 145. For an important and helpful treatment of the place of the love feast in the liturgical practices of British Methodism, see Frank Baker, *Methodism and the Love Feast* (London: Epworth Press, 1957). For a consideration of the American practice, see Richard O. Johnson, "The Development of the Love Feast in Early American Methodism," *Methodist History* 19, no. 2 (January 1981): 67–83; and Lester Ruth, "A Little Heaven Below: The Love Feast and Lord's Supper in Early American Methodism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 59–79.

[81.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:260.

[82.](#) Ibid.

[83.](#) Ibid. 8:261.

[84.](#) Ibid. By means of this precept, Wesley sought to inculcate the disposition of humility through the *practice* of obedience. This approach of spiritual guidance and care is similar to that of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. See Anthony C. Meisel and M. L. Del Mastro, *The Rule of St. Benedict* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

[85.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:26.

[86.](#) Ibid., 12:356.

[87.](#) Though at the first Methodist Conference in 1744, Wesley and others met with all the preachers, later on they reduced this participation to a select number. See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13:255.

[88.](#) Ibid., 8:331.

[89.](#) Albert C. Outler, "Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?" in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 223–24.

[90.](#) Ibid., 224.

[91.](#) Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:3.

[92.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:589. See also: A. H. Harrison, *The Separation of*

Methodism from the Church of England (London: Epworth Press, 1945); and N. S. Richardson, "John Wesley on Separation from the Church," *American Quarterly Church Review* 14 (1861): 63–74.

[93](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:403.

[94](#). Ibid.

[95](#). Ibid., 2:459.

[96](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:337. For an excellent treatment of Wesley's complicated relations with the Calvinists of his age, especially during the 1770s controversy, see Herbert McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism* (Carlisle, Cumbria UK: Paternoster Publishing, 2001).

[97](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:337.

[98](#). Ibid.

[99](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:284.

[100](#). Hempton, *Empire of the Spirit*, 58. Emphasis is mine. Though the theology of Hempton's assessment in this instance is problematic, nevertheless, his book is a very helpful one, historically speaking, on the nature of Methodism.

[101](#). Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005). 232.

[102](#). Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), 150.

[103](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:538.

[104](#). Outler, *John Wesley*, 46.

[105](#). Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Changes* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 12–13.

[106](#). Telford, *Letters*, 7:106.

[107](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:79. Emphasis is mine.

[108](#). Ibid. Emphasis is mine.

[109](#). Campbell, *Christian Antiquity*, 16.

[110](#). Ibid., 104.

[111](#). J. Steven O'Malley, "Pietistic Influence on John Wesley: Wesley and Gerhard Tersteegen," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 64.

[112](#). Ibid., 61.

[113](#). Ibid., 65. See also Gerhard Tersteegen, "Gerhard Tersteegen (Selections)," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 241–52; Gerhard Tersteegen, *Sermons and Hymns of Tersteegen*, 2nd ed. (Hampton, Tenn.: Harvey Christian Publishers, 1999); and Gerhard

Tersteegen, *Life and Letters* (Hampton, Tenn.: Harvey Christian Publishers, 1990).

[114](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:381.

[115](#). Henry H. Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 5.

[116](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:322. Emphasis is mine.

[117](#). Ibid., 8:323. Emphasis is mine.

[118](#). Ibid.

[119](#). See Outler's introduction to the sermon "The Means of Grace" in Outler, *Sermons*, 1:377. See also Ole E. Borgen, "No End without the Means: John Wesley and the Sacraments," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 46, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 63–85; and Gerald O. McCulloh, "The Discipline of Life in Early Methodism through Preaching and Other Means of Grace," in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 161–81.

[120](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:381.

[121](#). Ibid., 1:382.

[122](#). Ibid., 4:332. This is a manuscript sermon that was found among Wesley's papers, but a sermon that he, for whatever reason, chose not to publish.

[123](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:35.

[124](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:382.

[125](#). Ibid., 1:383. Dean G. Blevins follows the contributions of Henry Knight fairly closely in his "Means of Grace: Towards a Wesleyan Praxis of Spiritual Formation," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 69–84.

[126](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:190.

[127](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:200.

[128](#). Ibid., 1:395. And Wesley also adds: "He [God] can convey his grace, either in or out of any of the means which he hath appointed." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:395.

[129](#). Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, 49.

[130](#). Ibid., 1:381.

[131](#). Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:810.

[132](#). John Lawson, *The Wesley Hymns as a Guide to Scriptural Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 165.

[133](#). Ibid.

[134](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 3:430. Staples points out that the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, for Wesley, is "a spiritual and not a bodily presence."

[135](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 432 (1 Corinthians 11:20).

[136.](#) Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1991), 227.

[137.](#) Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:811.

[138.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:429.

[139.](#) Ibid., 3:432.

[140.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:159.

[141.](#) Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:811–12.

[142.](#) Lawson, *Wesley Hymns*, 171. Colin Williams, who offers a different view, notes: "This sacrifice, which by a real oblation was not to be offered more than once, is, by a devout and thankful commemoration, to be offered up every day." See Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 161.

[143.](#) Lawson, *Wesley Hymns*, 168.

[144.](#) Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:811.

[145.](#) Theodore H. Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 130.

[146.](#) See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 204.

[147.](#) John Wesley, *John Wesley's Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (Nashville: Quarterly Review, 1984), 131.

[148.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:431. Jesus' command to "do this in remembrance of me" may refer to anytime one eats and drinks as hinted at in the apostle Paul's observation, "In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me' " (1 Corinthians 11:25).

[149.](#) Ibid., 3:432.

[150.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:242–43.

[151.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:196.

[152.](#) Ibid., 2:196–97. For a suitable treatment that assays the primary material with respect to this issue, see Gayle Carlton Felton, *This Gift of Water* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 26–48.

[153.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:197.

[154.](#) Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:111. See also p. 135. Wesley's Catholic/Anglican heritage, with its association of regeneration and infant baptism, pulls his theology toward both sacerdotalism and, ironically enough, the irresistibility of grace. Knight, in trying to avoid this predicament, draws a distinction between irresistible grace and the inability to resist grace, a distinction that seems

artificial to say the least. "The reason infants are invariably born again," Knight explains, "is not that baptismal grace is irresistible for them, but, unlike adults, they are unable to resist it." See Knight, *Presence of God*, 180.

[155](#). Telford, *Letters*, 6:239–40.

[156](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:197. In his journal on January 25, 1739, Wesley writes: "Of the adults I have known baptized lately, one only was at that time born again, in the full sense of the word." See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 19:32. Nevertheless, Wesley also affirms that when the sacrament is duly received, it is "always accompanied with the inward grace." See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:240.

[157](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:225.

[158](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:429.

[159](#). Ibid. In a letter to William Green, Wesley maintains that "nine-tenths of men in England have no more religion than horses, and perish through the contempt of it." See Telford, *Letters*, 8:179.

[160](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 1:428–29.

[161](#). Ibid., 1:430. Wesley's language here is strong, "Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed . . ."; nevertheless, his point is to underscore the importance of real, vital, inward change, a change without which one would not be fit for the kingdom of heaven.

[162](#). Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:107.

[163](#). Ibid.

[164](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:196–97.

[165](#). See Wesley's letter to his mother on August 17, 1733, in Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:15.

[166](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:268.

[167](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:323.

[168](#). Baker, *Letters*, 25:166. For a broader treatment of the role that reason and deliberation played in Wesley's overall theology, see Wallace G. Gray, "The Place of Reason in the Theology of John Wesley" (dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1953); and Rex D. Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined: A Study in the Theology of John Wesley" (thesis, Harvard University, 1986).

[169](#). Davies, *Methodist Societies*, 9:262–63.

[170](#). Ibid.

[171](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:166.

[172](#). Ibid., 3:319.

[173](#). Ibid.

[174.](#) Ibid., 3:313.

[175.](#) Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 28.

[176.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 20:151, n.6.

[177.](#) Ibid. 20:125.

[178.](#) Ibid. 20:204.

[179.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:14.

[180.](#) Ibid., 11:15.

[181.](#) Ibid.

[182.](#) Ibid., 11:155. Weber maintains that Wesley's position on political responsibility and authority was "an aberration from his evangelical theology." That is, Wesley's conception of God in terms of politics was different from that operative in the *ordo salutis*. See Theodore R. Weber, *Politics and the Order of Salvation: Transforming Wesleyan Political Ethics* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 411.

[183.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:99.

[184.](#) Ibid., 11:70.

[185.](#) Ibid., 11:92.

[186.](#) Ibid. For a discussion of freedom of conscience as a human right, informed by theological considerations, see Leon O. Hynson, "John Wesley's Concept of Liberty of Conscience," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 36–46.

[187.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:79. Emphasis is mine.

[188.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:13.

[189.](#) Ibid., 3:425.

[190.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 8:265.

[191.](#) Ibid., 8:17. Leon O. Hynson explores Wesley's reflections on slavery, once again, in terms of human rights in his "Wesley's 'Thoughts Upon Slavery': A Declaration of Human Rights," *Methodist History* 33, no. 1 (October 1994): 46–57. See also Irv A. Brendlinger, "A Study of the Views of Major Eighteenth Century Evangelicals on Slavery and Race, with Special Reference to John Wesley" (dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1982).

[192.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 8:23.

[193.](#) Ibid., 8:207. Hynson explores Wesley's views on slavery in their proper context, that is, in terms of natural law and human rights. See Hynson, "Wesley's 'Thoughts Upon Slavery,' " 46–57.

[194.](#) Paul J. Lokken, "Review of a Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics

and Natural Law," *The Journal of Law and Religion* XVI, no. 1 (2001): 701.

[195.](#) Ibid., 702.

[196.](#) Ibid.

[197.](#) Ibid.

[198.](#) Ibid.

[199.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:10.

[200.](#) Franklin I. Gamwell, "The Purpose of Human Rights," *Process Studies* 29, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2000): 326.

[201.](#) Jean Porter, "A Tradition of Civility: The Natural Law as a Tradition of Moral Inquiry," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 1 (2003): 27.

[202.](#) Ibid. See also Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).

[203.](#) Porter, "Tradition of Civility," 29.

[204.](#) Ibid., 46.

[205.](#) John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 23.

[206.](#) See Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes: Basic Errors in Modern Thought—How They Came About, Their Consequences, and How to Avoid Them* (New York: MacMillan, 1985), 108–30.

[207.](#) Finnis, *Natural Law*, 49.

[208.](#) D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 21.

[209.](#) Ibid., 51.

[210.](#) Ibid., 210.

[211.](#) Ibid.

[212.](#) Robert S. J. Drinan, *Can God and Caesar Coexist: Balancing Religious Freedom & International Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 42.

[213.](#) Ibid.

[214.](#) Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 26.

[215.](#) Ibid., 235.

[216.](#) Ibid., 115.

[217.](#) Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 244.

[218.](#) Ibid.

[219.](#) Ibid., 246.

Chapter 8: Entire Sanctification: The Purity and Excellence of Holy Love

1. Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 1:321.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 1:352.

4. Ibid., 2:17.

5. Ibid., 1:327. In many respects, Wesley's doctrine of original sin is not intelligible apart from its Anglican and Augustinian context. For a consideration of sin as "privation," well developed in the writings of the Bishop of Hippo, see Leon O. Hynson, "Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 65–83.

6. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:330.

7. Ibid., 1:323.

8. John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 3:212. Emphasis is mine.

9. Ibid., 4:133. Emphasis is mine. For a consideration of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, see Timothy L. Smith, "John Wesley and the Second Blessing," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring-Fall 1986): 137–58; and Frank G. Carver, "Biblical Foundations for the 'Secondness' of Entire Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 7–23.

10. Telford, *Letters*, 5:315. Emphasis is mine.

11. Ibid., 5:333. Emphasis is mine.

12. Ibid., 6:116. Emphasis is mine. Wesley conflates a few matters here in his observation that Mrs. Barton was delivered from inbred as well as actual sin. In other words, in this context, Wesley holds together discrete liberties that in his theology remain temporally distinct.

13. Ibid., 6:144–45. Emphasis is mine.

14. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:346.

15. Ibid.

16. Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978), 11:402.

17. Ibid.

18. Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of*

Salvation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1982), 134.

[19.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:265.

[20.](#) Ibid., 5:112–13.

[21.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:519. Emphasis is mine. With respect to the roles of ministry, the task of visiting the sick (and the poor) demonstrates not separation as in some praxis models, not ministry that occurs in one direction only, from the poor to those who minister to them, but it reveals, once again, a mutuality of need and of love in an ever-larger circle of ministry. See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:389, 393.

[22.](#) Ibid., 1:695. Emphasis is mine.

[23.](#) Ibid., 3:404. Emphasis is mine.

[24.](#) Ibid., 1:695.

[25.](#) Ibid., 3:389. Emphasis is mine. Though the ministry of visiting the sick was one open to the poor, women, the young, as well as the old, Wesley contended that "the rich" have a special calling to this labor. He reasons: "You have likewise a peculiar advantage over many, by your station in life. Being superior in rank to them, you have the more influence on that very account. Your inferiors of course look up to you with a kind of reverence. And the condescension which you show in visiting them gives them a prejudice in your favour which inclines them to hear you with attention, and willingly receive what you say. Improve this prejudice to the uttermost for the benefit of their souls, as well as their bodies." See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:393.

[26.](#) Ibid., 2:166.

[27.](#) Ibid., 1:381. On this topic, see Henry H. Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992); and Ole E. Borgen, "No End without the Means: John Wesley and the Sacraments," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 46, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 63–85.

[28.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:160.

[29.](#) Ibid., 2:167.

[30.](#) Ibid.

[31.](#) Ibid. In order to see, quite clearly, the parallelism in Wesley's doctrine of salvation, compare this passage to the one that pertains to justification in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:162–63. Moreover, the reader should also be aware that Wesley often uses the term "sanctified" for "entire sanctification." Of course, Wesley himself realized the importance of the adjective "entire"—to distinguish the initially from the entirely sanctified—however, he was not always consistent in its use.

[32.](#) L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, vols. 1–3 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1872), 2:593.

[33.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:167.

[34.](#) W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 18–23, *Journals and Diaries I–VI*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–95), 21:325.

[35.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 6:42.

[36.](#) Ibid., 7:317. See also the letters to Mrs. Pywell, 6:59; to Elizabeth Ritchie, 7:102; to Hannah Ball, 7:217; and to John Ogilvie, 7:283.

[37.](#) Ibid., 7:33.

[38.](#) Ibid., 7:295. Emphasis is mine.

[39.](#) Ibid., 7:322.

[40.](#) Ibid. Emphasis is mine. Wesley, however, also used the term "naked faith" in a negative sense when he, for example, was critical of quietistic approaches to spiritual growth. See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 20:143.

[41.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:164.

[42.](#) Ibid. Emphasis is mine. In his journal in the year 1761, Wesley notes that some of his followers made the following observation, which once again evidences parallelism: "We see now, we sought it [entire sanctification] by our works. . . . We never expected to receive it *in a moment*, by *faith*, as we did *justification*." See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:325.

[43.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:194.

[44.](#) Ibid., 1:347. Emphasis is mine.

[45.](#) Ibid., 2:167–68. For more on how the divine evidence and conviction are different in sanctifying faith than they are in justifying faith, see "The Repentance of Believers," in Outler, *Sermons*, 1:347.

[46.](#) To emphasize that entire sanctification is received by faith through grace, Wesley uses the phrase "naked faith" in several places in his writings. See Telford, *Letters*, 6:238, 7:295, and 7:322.

[47.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 4:71. Emphasis is mine.

[48.](#) George C. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 361.

[49.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries IV*, 21:499.

[50.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:200. For the connection between grace and faith in Wesley's theology, sustained by a Pauline emphasis, see Walter Z. Klaiber, "Aus Glauben, Damit Aus Gnaden: Der Grundsatz Paulinischer Soteriologie Und Die Gnadenlehre John Wesleys," *Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche* 88, no. 3

(1991): 313–38.

[51.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:284.

[52.](#) Ibid., 3:136.

[53.](#) Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 107–8.

[54.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:490.

[55.](#) Ibid.

[56.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 4:321.

[57.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:584. Robin Maas makes the connection between the atoning work of Christ and the participatory theme of entire sanctification in her *Crucified Love: The Practice of Christian Perfection* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

[58.](#) Ibid.

[59.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:423. Emphasis is mine.

[60.](#) Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 187. The key, of course, in this context is to recognize that Wesley employed the term "merit" in a couple of ways, one of which was fully in accord with Protestant understandings of grace.

[61.](#) Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley, The Library of Protestant Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 253.

[62.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:169.

[63.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 7:222.

[64.](#) Ibid., 8:190. Emphasis is mine.

[65.](#) Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), 70.

[66.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:104–5. Though there will be growth after the actualization of the graces of entire sanctification, it will not entail an increase in purity. Otherwise, *entire* sanctification has not occurred.

[67.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:442.

[68.](#) Albert Outler maintains that Wesley was greatly influenced by Eastern spirituality, especially by Macarius and Ephrem Syrus, in his understanding of Christian perfection as a "perfecting perfection." See Outler, *Sermons*, 1:74. However, for Wesley, the substance of entire sanctification (in distinction from the process of sanctification) as well as the manner of its actualization were both informed by western sources.

[69.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:329.

[70.](#) Wesley rejected the notion that one could be born of God and entirely

sanctified simultaneously, without any interval between the two works of grace.

[71.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:442.

[72.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 20:39.

[73.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:333.

[74.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 6:132. This evidence, of course, does not deny the fact that although Wesley believed that entire sanctification was a present possibility for all who are justified and born of God, he nevertheless realized, in a very pastoral way, that most people would not enjoy such liberating grace until just prior to death. See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:388; and Telford, *Letters*, 5:39.

[75.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:373.

[76.](#) Ibid., 11:366. Wesley noted that he was angry at à Kempis for being "too strict." What he most likely discerned in this spiritual classic, then, was the explication of humility through the embrace of desolation or suffering. See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:243.

[77.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:367.

[78.](#) Outler, *John Wesley*, 122.

[79.](#) Even Outler was very cautious in terms of the contributions of the Eastern Fathers to Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection and argued for their "indirect," not direct, influence. See Outler, *John Wesley*, 252.

[80.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 4:299.

[81.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:403.

[82.](#) Ibid., 1:402. The inculcation of holy habits or dispositions is another way of expressing the *process* of sanctification. For a helpful discussion of the salience of holy affections in Wesley's practical theology, see Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989).

[83.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:403.

[84.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:374. See also Outler, *Sermons*, 2:101.

[85.](#) Wesley points out that the full assurance of hope is "such clear confidence that I *shall enjoy* the glory of God as excludes all doubt and fear concerning this." Nevertheless he adds: "And this confidence is totally different from an opinion that 'no saint shall fall from grace.' It has no relation to it." See Telford, *Letters*, 7:58.

[86.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:422. Earlier, that is, prior to 1757, Wesley had mistakenly thought that "one saved from sin could not fall; now we know the contrary." See Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:426.

[87.](#) Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 22:35.

[88.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:417.

[89.](#) Ibid., 11:396.

[90.](#) Ibid. Such ongoing dependence, even in terms of the entirely sanctified, makes it clear that perfect love is expressive of a relation, now purified, between God and the saints.

[91.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 4:13.

[92.](#) Ibid.

[93.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:396. For more on these distinctions, see Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 140–60.

[94.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:442. For an interesting, modern treatment of Wesley's doctrine of perfection, which demonstrates its relevance to everyday life, see William E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection: An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth Press, 1984). For more on the issue of the dependence on Christ of those who are perfected in love, see Telford, *Letters*, 4:13, 186, 189, 191; and 5:315; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:395–96, 417, and 419.

[95.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:103.

[96.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:267.

[97.](#) Ibid., 5:6. For more on this topic of infirmities, see Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:66; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:374.

[98.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:103.

[99.](#) Ibid., 2:104. See Wesley's sermon "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:202–21.

[100.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:374.

[101.](#) Ibid., 11:375.

[102.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:65. See also Outler's comments in his preface to Wesley's sermon "Christian Perfection," in which he writes: "If, for Wesley, salvation was the total restoration of the deformed image of God in us, and if its fullness was the recovery of our negative power not to sin and our positive power to love God supremely, this denotes that furthest reach of grace and its triumphs in this life that Wesley chose to call 'Christian Perfection.'" See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:97.

[103.](#) Ibid., 1:436.

[104.](#) Ibid., 1:328.

[105.](#) Ibid., 2:117. Though Wesley writes about the entirely sanctified as strong in the Lord, maturity in the form of a wealth of experience or chronology

is not Wesley's basic point. Indeed, he maintained that those tender in age can yet be entirely sanctified: "I buried, near the same place, one who had soon finished her course, going to God in the full assurance of faith when she was little more than four years old." See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 20:39. See also Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:333.

[106](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:376.

[107](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:98.

[108](#). Ibid., 2:127.

[109](#). Ibid., 2:132.

[110](#). Ibid., 2:133. Wandering thoughts in this sense may be understood as yet another instance of an infirmity, from which no one can be free. See Wesley's sermon "Christian Perfection" in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:103 ff. For other examples of Wesley's views on wandering thoughts, see Telford, *Letters*, 3:243–44; and 4:307.

[111](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:401.

[112](#). Telford, *Letters*, 4:187. And several years later, Wesley counseled Ann Loxdale "to read and meditate upon the 13th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. There is the true picture of Christian perfection." Telford, *Letters*, 7:120.

[113](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:160.

[114](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:394.

[115](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:141.

[116](#). Ibid., 6:136. As concerned as Wesley was for the doctrine of entire sanctification, the evidence suggests that he himself never bore personal witness to this measure of grace. See Frank Baker, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, *Letters II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 294; Telford, *Letters*, 5:43; and Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 22:72.

[117](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:420. Emphasis is mine.

[118](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:50. Emphasis is mine. In a subsequent letter to Peggy Dale, Wesley relates that one can be entirely sanctified and yet lack the witness of full assurance (probably due to ignorance or bodily disorder). See Telford, *Letters*, 5:78.

[119](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:402. Emphasis is mine.

[120](#). Ibid., 11:402. Emphasis is mine.

[121](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 638 (1 John 4:18). See also Telford, *Letters*, 5:175; and 6:146. Notice also that Wesley distinguishes one that is awakened, who has fear without love, from a babe in Christ who has love and fear. The former

relates to the faith of a servant; the latter, to the faith of a child of God.

[122](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:422. Emphasis is mine.

[123](#). Ibid., 11:422–23.

[124](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:112.

[125](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:387; and 8:294.

[126](#). Ibid., 11:388.

[127](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:39. Emphasis is mine.

[128](#). Ibid., 4:11. Emphasis is mine.

[129](#). Ibid., 4:44.

[130](#). Ibid., 4:10. In this same letter, Wesley observes, "neither Jews nor heathens any more than Christians ever did or ever will enter into the New Jerusalem unless they are cleansed from all sin before they enter into eternity."

[131](#). Ibid., 4:13.

[132](#). Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:285.

[133](#). John Beevers, *The Autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux: The Story of a Soul* (New York: Image Books, 1957), 118.

[134](#). Telford, *Letters*, 5:16.

[135](#). For an excellent assessment of John Wesley's views on Christian mysticism, see Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1989).

[136](#). See Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1961), 34–35.

[137](#). Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 157.

[138](#). Eric W. Gritsch, *A History of Lutheranism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 116.

[139](#). Ibid.

[140](#). Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 152.

[141](#). Ibid., 158.

[142](#). Outler, *Sermons*, 2:153 ff.

[143](#). Ibid.

Chapter 9: Eschatology and Glorification: The Triumph of Holy Love

[1](#). Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1–4, *Sermons*

(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87), 4:25.

[2.](#) Ibid., 4:26.

[3.](#) Ibid. For a discussion that parses the distinction between time and eternity in Wesley's theology, see David I. Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting: John Wesley on Eternity and Time*, 2 vols. (New York: Peter Lang, 1991–1992).

[4.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:32.

[5.](#) Ibid., 3:96.

[6.](#) Ibid., 3:181.

[7.](#) Ibid., 2:492.

[8.](#) Ibid., 2:493.

[9.](#) Ibid.

[10.](#) Ibid. This is not only a scripture truth, but also one that Wesley eagerly embraced in his overall Pietist perspective and in his emphasis on inward religion.

[11.](#) Ibid., 2:493–94.

[12.](#) Ibid., 2:495.

[13.](#) Ibid.

[14.](#) Ibid., 2:498.

[15.](#) Ibid., 2:490.

[16.](#) Jerry L. Walls, "As the Waters Cover the Sea: John Wesley on the Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (October 1996): 555. Perhaps this "conversion" might take place after death in a purgation process since this author is well known for his articulation of the doctrine of purgatory.

[17.](#) Ibid.

[18.](#) Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 236. See also Kenneth D. Brown, "John Wesley: Post or Premillennialist?" *Methodist History* 28, no. 1 (October 1989): 33–41.

[19.](#) Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 238.

[20.](#) John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1975), 724 (Revelation 20:4).

[21.](#) See Wesley's early manuscript sermon (one that he never saw fit to publish) "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men," in which he contends that death will deliver us not only from "pain and sickness, . . . but also from sin." A similar emphasis is found in the piece "Death and Deliverance," another manuscript sermon. See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:539; and 4:212.

[22.](#) See Wesley's sermon "On Eternity," in which this theme is explored. See

Outler, *Sermons*, 2:363.

[23.](#) Ibid., 4:207.

[24.](#) John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 5:96. Early Methodist views of death and dying, informed by the holy living tradition of Jeremy Taylor, form a sharp contrast to contemporary, more clinical, understandings. See Richard J. Bell, "Our People Die Well: Deathbed Scenes in John Wesley's Arminian Magazine," *Mortality* 10, no. 3 (August 2005): 210–23; and Robert Cecil, "Holy Dying: Evangelical Attitudes to Death," *History Today* 32 (August 1982): 30–34.

[25.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:25.

[26.](#) Ibid., 2:361.

[27.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 8:54.

[28.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:23. For more information on Wesley's views concerning this topic, see my earlier work *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore, Ky.: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993), 192 ff.

[29.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:51. See also Outler, *Sermons*, 2:290–91. Wesley also points out, however, and in a paradoxical way, that death will not put an end to the body either. What Wesley has in mind here is perhaps the continuity entailed in the resurrection of the body at the last day. See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:367.

[30.](#) Ibid., 2:361.

[31.](#) Ibid., 4:8.

[32.](#) Ibid., 4:189.

[33.](#) Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), 2:69.

[34.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:8.

[35.](#) John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), 50–51.

[36.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 279 (Acts 2:27).

[37.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:187.

[38.](#) Ibid., 4:193.

[39.](#) Ibid., 4:190, 33. Although the Oxford English Dictionary indicates that the New Testament use of Hades refers to the state or the abode of the dead, and is often associated with the Hebrew Sheol, a much earlier use can be found in Greek mythology, in which Hades refers to the oldest name of the god of the dead, also called Pluto.

[40.](#) Ibid., 4:9.

[41.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 7:168.

[42.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 3:186. Freedom and rest from the wicked is also a leading idea in Wesley's first published sermon, "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men." In this piece, however, Wesley put forth a problematic view that he later renounced; that is, that death itself can purify humanity by delivering it, at least in some sense, from its sins. Wesley writes: "For in the moment wherein they shake off the flesh, they are delivered, not only from the troubling of the wicked, not only from pain and sickness, from folly and infirmity, but also from sin." See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:539.

[43.](#) Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 250.

[44.](#) Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978), 13:31.

[45.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:192.

[46.](#) Ibid., 4:191.

[47.](#) Ibid., 2:292.

[48.](#) Ibid.

[49.](#) Ibid., 1:357.

[50.](#) Ibid., 1:357–58.

[51.](#) Ibid., 1:358. Wesley's views on the millennium are complex and difficult to understand. In his *NT Notes*, for instance, he remarks: "Two distinct thousand years are mentioned throughout this whole passage [Revelation 20]. Each is mentioned thrice; the thousand wherein Satan is bound, ver. 2, 3, 7, the thousand wherein the saints shall reign, ver. 4,5,6. . . . By observing these two distinct thousand years, many difficulties are avoided. There is room enough for the fulfilling of all the prophecies, and those which before seemed to clash are reconciled: particularly those which speak on the one hand, of a most flourishing state of the Church as yet to come; and on the other, of the fatal security of men in the last days of the world." See Wesley, *NT Notes*, 723–24.

[52.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:359.

[53.](#) Ibid., 1:361.

[54.](#) Ibid. Helpful in this context is William M. Greathouse's work, "John Wesley's View of the Last Things," in *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of the Last Thing*, ed. H. Ray Dunning (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1995), 139–60.

[55.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:362–63.

[56.](#) Ibid., 1:363.

[57.](#) Ibid., 2:18.

[58.](#) Ibid.

[59.](#) Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore, Ky.: Francis Asbury Press, 1996), 208.

[60.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 4:144. This sermon is emblematic of Wesley's soteriology, since it displays how he held in tension the idea of justification by faith, which by his own admission he did not understand until 1738, and holiness of heart and life—an emphasis which was present as early as 1725.

[61.](#) Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 207.

[62.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 2:186.

[63.](#) Rupert E. Davies, ed. *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies, I: History, Nature and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 95.

[64.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:190. For other evidence pertaining to a twofold justification, see Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:431, 444.

[65.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:264. Emphasis is mine.

[66.](#) Ibid.

[67.](#) This is not to suggest, however, that there did not remain considerable differences between the theology of Bull and Wesley. Moreover, for two excellent treatments of Wesley's struggles with Calvinist antinomianism, see Earl P. Crow, "John Wesley's Conflict with Antinomianism in Relation to the Moravians and Calvinists" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Manchester, Manchester, England, 1964); and Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Wilmore, Ky.: Wesley Heritage Press, 1988).

[68.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:337–38.

[69.](#) Schaff, *Creeds*, 2:117–18.

[70.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 5:270.

[71.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:433. For a careful contextualization of Wesley's theological differences with the Calvinists of his time, see Herbert McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Publishing, 2001); and Coppedge, *Wesley in Theological Debate*.

[72.](#) Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:433. See also Wesley's "Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review," in *ibid.*, 10:393.

[73.](#) Telford, *Letters*, 6:76.

[74.](#) Ibid., 5:270. For works that compare Wesley's thought and practices with those of Roman Catholicism, see John M. Todd, *John Wesley and the Catholic Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958); J. Augustin Legger, "Wesley's Place in Catholic Thought," *Constructive Quarterly* 2 (1914): 329–60; and R. Newton Flew, "Methodism and the Catholic Tradition," in *Northern Catholicism*,

ed. N. Williams (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 515–30.

[75.](#) Gerald Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 111.

[76.](#) Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 216.

[77.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 627 (2 Peter 3:13).

[78.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 1:369.

[79.](#) Ibid.

[80.](#) Ibid., 2:503. For studies that raise the question of whether Wesley was a post- or premillennialist in his eschatology, see Kenneth D. Brown, "John Wesley: Post or Premillennialist?" *Methodist History* 28, no. 1 (October 1989): 33–41; and J. Steven O'Malley, "Pietist Influences in the Eschatological Thought of John Wesley and Jurgen Moltmann," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 29, no. 1 (Spring-Fall 1994): 127–39.

[81.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:504.

[82.](#) Ibid., 2:509. See also Theodore H. Runyon, "The New Creation: The Wesleyan Distinctive," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 5–19.

[83.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:510. Though Wesley as an Arminian affirms that men and woman can fall from grace in freely and stubbornly committing sin, after death their condition is apparently immutable such that they will not (and cannot) sin. See Barry Edward Bryant, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Sin" (dissertation, King's College, University of London, 1992).

[84.](#) Wesley, *NT Notes*, 19 (Matthew 5:5).

[85.](#) Ibid.

[86.](#) Outler, *Sermons*, 2:510.

[87.](#) Ibid. For additional references to the close association between happiness and holiness in Wesley's sermons, see Outler, *Sermons*, 2:600; 3:37; 3:100; 3:194, 197; 4:67; and 4:121.

[88.](#) Ibid., 2:510.

[89.](#) Ibid., 2:445.

[90.](#) Ibid. The love and providential care of the Creator for all animals is evident in Wesley's observation, expressed in his sermon "On Divine Providence" that "He knows all the animals in this lower world, whether beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, or insects. He knows all the qualities and powers he hath given them, from the highest to the lowest." See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:539.

[91.](#) Ibid., 2:448. But it is not that animals will then become rational for the first time. Wesley maintained that they may have a share of reason in this life.

See Outler, *Sermons*, 2:450.

[92](#). Ibid., 2:449. Wesley's respect for and kindness toward animals is revealed in his sermon "On the Education of Children," in which he states: "They [the parents] will not allow them [their children] to hurt or give pain to anything that has life. They will not permit them to rob birds' nests, much less to kill anything without necessity; not even snakes, which are as innocent as worms, or toads, which, notwithstanding their ugliness, and the ill name they lie under, have been proved over and over to be as harmless as flies. Let them extend in its measure the rule of doing as they would be done by to every animal whatsoever." See Outler, *Sermons*, 3:360.

[93](#). Ibid., 2:450.

[94](#). Wesley, *NT Notes*, 726 (Revelation 21:2).

[95](#). Albert C. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies: An Agenda for 'Phase III,' " in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 131.

[96](#). Albert C. Outler, "Towards a Re-Appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian," in *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 43.

Selected Bibliography

Primary Works of John and Charles Wesley

Books

- Albin, Thomas A., and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds. *Charles Wesley's Earliest Sermons*. London: Wesley Historical Society, 1987. Six unpublished manuscript sermons.
- Baker, Frank. *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*. Stone Mountain, Ga.: George Zimmerman, 1991. Reprint of the 1966 edition.
- , ed. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vols. 25–26, *Letters I–II*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980–82.
- Burwash, Rev N., *Wesley's Fifty-Two Standard Sermons*. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1967.
- Cragg, Gerald R., ed. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975.
- Curnock, Nehemiah, ed. *The Journal of Rev. John Wesley*. 8 vols. London: Epworth Press, 1909–16.
- Davies, Rupert E., ed. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies, I: History, Nature, and Design*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Hildebrandt, Franz, and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol.7, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.
- Jackson, Thomas, ed. *The Journals of Rev. Charles Wesley*. 2 vols. London: John Mason, 1949. Reprinted Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980.
- , ed. *The Works of Rev. John Wesley*. 14 vols. London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1829–31. Reprinted Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978.

- Kimbrough, ST, Jr. *A Song for the Poor: Hymns by Charles Wesley*. New York: Board of Global Ministry, 1993.
- . *The Unpublished Poetical Writings of Charles Wesley*. 3 vols. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1988–92.
- Kimbrough, ST, and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds. *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Osborn, George, ed. *Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*. 13 vols. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1992. Forthcoming reprint of 1872 edition.
- Outler, Albert C., ed. *John Wesley. The Library of Protestant Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- , ed. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 1–4, *Sermons*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87.
- Outler, Albert C., and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- Sugden, Edward H., ed. *Wesley's Standard Sermons*. London: Epworth Press, 1951.
- Telford, John, ed. *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*. 8 vols. London: Epworth Press, 1931.
- , ed. *Sayings and Portraits of John Wesley*. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1995.
- Wainwright, Geoffrey, ed. *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. Madison, N.J.: Charles Wesley Society, 1995.
- Ward, W. Reginald, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vols. 18–24, *Journals and Diaries I–VII*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–97.
- Wesley, Charles. *The Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.* Taylors, S.C.: Methodist Reprint Society, 1977.
- Wesley, John. *A Christian Library, Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue*. 30 vols. London: T. Blanshard, 1819–27.
- . *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week*. 3rd ed. Library of Methodist Classics. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.
- . *The Desideratum; or, Electricity Made Plain and Useful*. 1st ed. Library of Methodist Classics. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.
- . *Devotions and Prayers of John Wesley*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977.

- . *The Dignity of Human Nature*. 1st ed. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.
- . *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. London: William Bowyer, 1755. Most recent reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987.
- . *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*. 3 vols. Bristol: William Pine, 1765. Facsimile reprint, Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1975.
- . *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. London: Epworth Press. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990.
- . *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity*. Library of Methodist Classics. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.
- . *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*. London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1868.
- . *Primitive Physic: An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases by John Wesley*. Library of Methodist Classics. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.
- . *The Sunday Service of the Methodists*. London: William Strahan, 1784.
- . *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*. 2 vols. Lancaster, Pa.: William Hamilton, 1810.
- . *Wesley's Forms of Prayers*. Library of Methodist Classics. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.
- Wesley, John, and Charles Wesley. *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. London: William Strahan, 1739.
- Wesley, Samuel. *Advice to a Young Clergyman in a Letter to Him*. London: C. Rivington, 1735.
- . *Dissertationes in Librum Jobi*. London: William Bowyer, 1736.
- . *The Young Student's Library*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1984. Wesley, Susanna. *The Prayers of Susanna Wesley*. London: John Dunton, 1692.

Chapters in Books

- Wesley, John. "A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week." In *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 11:203–259. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978.
- . "A Collection of Prayers for Families." In *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 11:237–259. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House,

1978.

———. "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists." In *The Works of John Wesley: The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies, 253–80. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.

———. "A Scheme of Self-Examination Used by the First Methodists in Oxford." In *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 11:521–523. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978.

Secondary Works

Books

Arminius, James. *The Writings of James Arminius*. Translated by James Nichols and W.R. Bagnall. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977.

Arndt, Johann. *True Christianity*. Translated by Peter Erb. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.

Baker, Frank. *John Wesley and the Church of England*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970.

———. *Methodism and the Love Feast*. London: Epworth Press, 1957.

Bence, Clarence. *John Wesley's Teleological Hermeneutic*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1982.

Bewes, Richard. *John Wesley's England: A Nineteenth Century Pictorial History Based on an 18th Century Journal*. San Francisco: Harper, 1984.

Borgen, Ole E. *John Wesley on the Sacraments*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1985.

Brown, Dale W. *Understanding Pietism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmanns, 1978.

Brown, Robert. *John Wesley's Theology: The Principle of Its Vitality and Its Progressive Stages of Development*. London: E. Stock, 1965.

Bruce, William. *Wesley and Swedenborg: A Review of the Rev. John Wesley's 'Thoughts on the Writings of Baron Swedenborg'*. London: J. Spears, 1877.

Bryant, Barry Edward. *John Wesley on the Origin of Evil*. Derbys, England: Moorley's Bookshop, 1992.

Campbell, Ted A. *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Changes*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991.

———. *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

- Cannon, William R. *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984.
- Carpenter, William. *Wesleyana: A Selection of the Most Important Passages in the Writings of the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Arranged to Form a Complete Body of Divinity*. London: W. Booth, 1825.
- Cell, George C. *John Wesley's New Testament Compared with the Authorized Version*. London: Lutterworth, 1938.
- . *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984.
- Chiles, Robert E. *Scriptural Christianity: A Call to John Wesley's Disciples*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1984.
- Clapper, Gregory S. *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989.
- Clark, J.C.D. *English Society 1660–1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Cobb, John B., Jr. *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- Collins, Kenneth J. *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- . *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- . *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Coppedge, Allan. *John Wesley in Theological Debate*. Wilmore, Ky.: Wesley Heritage Press, 1988.
- Creamer, David. *Methodist Hymnology; Comprehending Notices of the Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*. New York: Self-published, 1848.
- Cushman, Robert E. *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity: Studies in Methodist Doctrinal Standards*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989.
- Dayton, Donald W. *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1987.
- Deschner, John. *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985.
- Dieter, Melvin. *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*. 2nd ed. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996.
- Dunning, H. Ray. *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan*

- Perspective*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- . *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1988.
- Green, Richard. *The Works of John and Charles Wesley: A Bibliography*. London: C. H. Kelly, 1896.
- Gritsch, Eric W. *A History of Lutheranism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.
- Harrison, A. H. *The Separation of Methodism from the Church of England*. London: Epworth Press, 1945.
- Heitzenrater, Richard P. *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*. 2nd ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- . *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989.
- Hempton, David. *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*. Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing, 1997.
- Hynson, Leon. *To Reform the Nation: The Theological Foundation of Wesley's Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1985.
- Idle, Christopher. *The Journals of John Wesley*. Elgin, Ill.: Lion Publishing, 1996.
- Job, Reuben. *A Wesleyan Spiritual Reader*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Jones, Scott. *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Jones, Timothy K., and Keith Beasley-Topliffe. *A Longing for Holiness: Selected Writings of John Wesley*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997.
- Knight, Henry H. III. *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992.
- Kostlevy, William. *Holiness Manuscripts: A Guide to Sources Documenting the Wesleyan Holiness Movement in the United States and Canada*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994.
- Land, Steven J. *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Langford, Thomas A. *Methodist Theology*. Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 1998.
- . *Practical Divinity, Volume II: Readings in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Lawson, John. *Notes on Wesley's Forty-Four Sermons*. London: Epworth Press,

1964.

- . *Selections from John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament: Systematically Arranged with Explanatory Comments*. London: Epworth Press, 1955.
- . *The Wesley Hymns as a Guide to Scriptural Teaching*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1987.
- Lee, Sung-Duk. *Der Deutsche Pietismus Und John Wesley*. Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 2003.
- Lee, Umphrey. *Historical Backgrounds of Early Methodist Enthusiasm*. New York: AMS Press, 1931.
- . *John Wesley and Modern Religion*. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1936.
- Lindström, Harald. *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1982.
- Lodahl, Michael. *God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2003.
- Long, D. Stephen. *John Wesley's Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.
- Maas, Robin. *Crucified Love: The Practice of Christian Perfection*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Maddox, Randy L. *Aldersgate Reconsidered*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990.
- . *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994.
- McGonigle, Herbert. *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism*. Carlisle, Cumbria UK: Paternoster Publishing, 2001.
- Mitchell, Frank N. *The Writings of John Wesley: A Man for All Ages*. New York: Vantage Press, 1997.
- Mitton, Charles Leslie. *A Clue to Wesley's Sermons*. London: Epworth Press, 1951.
- Naglee, David I. *From Everlasting to Everlasting: John Wesley on Eternity and Time*. 2 vols. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991–92.
- Nagler, Arthur. *Pietism and Methodism*. Nashville: Publishing House M.E. Church, South, 1918.
- Oden, Thomas C. *The Living God: Systematic Theology: Volume One*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- . *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan

- Publishing, 1994.
- . *The Transforming Power of Grace*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Oden, Thomas C., and Leicester R. Longden. *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991.
- Oord, Thomas Jay, and Michael Lodahl. *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 2005.
- Outler, Albert C. *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975.
- Parker, Percy L. *The Journal of John Wesley*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974.
- Podmore, Colin. *The Moravian Church in England 1728–1760*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Rattenbury, J. Ernest. *The Conversion of the Wesleys: A Critical Study*. London: Epworth Press, 1938.
- Redwell, Randall. *May I Quote You, John Wesley*. Nashville: Cool Springs Press, 1996.
- Rogal, Samuel J. *The Historical, Biographical, and Artistic Background of Extant Portrait Paintings and Engravings of John Wesley, (1742–1951)* Studies in Art and Religious Interpretation; vol. 30. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.
- Rowe, Kenneth E. *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*. Revised ed. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980.
- Runyon, Theodore H. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Schmidt, Martin. *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*. 2 vols. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962–73.
- . *Pietismus*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1972.
- Schoenhals, G. Roger. *Wesley's Notes on the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1987.
- Stanley, Susie C. *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers' Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002.
- Staples, Rob L. *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1991.
- Starkey, Lycurgus M. *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962.
- Stein, K. James. *Philip Jakob Spener*. Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986.
- Stoeffler, F. Ernest. *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*. Grand

- Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1976.
- . *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century*. Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1973.
- Synan, Vinson. *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1987.
- Taylor, Richard S. *Exploring Christian Holiness: The Theological Formulation*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1985.
- . *God's Integrity and the Cross*. Nappanee, Ind.: Francis Asbury Press, 1999.
- Todd, John M. *John Wesley and the Catholic Church*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958.
- Tuttle, Robert G., Jr. *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1989.
- Tyerman, L. *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* Vols. 1–3, New York: Burt Franklin, 1872.
- Verhalen, Phillip A. *The Proclamation of the Word in the Writings of John Wesley*. Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1969.
- Wainwright, Geoffrey. *Methodists in Dialog*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995.
- Weber, Theodore R. *Politics and the Order of Salvation: Transforming Wesleyan Political Ethics*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998.
- Weston, Frank. *The Teaching of John Wesley as Gathered from His Writings*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1912.
- Whaling, Frank. *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Wiley, H. Orton. *Christian Theology*. 3 vols. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1940.
- Williams, Colin. *John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960.
- Wilson, Charles Randall. *The Correlation of Love and Law in the Theology of John Wesley*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1959.
- Wood, Laurence W. *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism: Rediscovering John Fletcher as John Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2002.
- Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1972.

Chapters in Books

- Davies, Rupert Eric. "Justification, Sanctification, and the Liberation of the Person." In *Sanctification and Liberation*, edited by Theodore H. Runyon, 64–82. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981.
- Flew, R. Newton. "Methodism and the Catholic Tradition." In *Northern Catholicism*, edited by N. Williams, 515–30. New York: Macmillan, 1933.
- Gill, Frederick Cyril. "Introduction." In *John Wesley's Prayers*, edited by Fredrick Cyril Gill, 9–17. London: Epworth Press, 1951.
- Greathouse, William M. "John Wesley's View of the Last Things." In *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of the Last Thing*, edited by H. Ray Dunning, 139–60. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1995.
- Heitzenrater, Richard P. "Wesley and His Diary." In *John Wesley: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by John Stacey, 11–22. London: Epworth Press, 1988.
- Hurley, Michael. "Introduction." In *John Wesley's Letters to a Roman Catholic*, edited by Michael Hurley, 22–47. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968.
- Lee, Hoo-Jung. "Experiencing the Spirit in Wesley and Macarius." In *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, edited by Randy Maddox, 197–212. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- McIntosh, Lawrence D. "The Place of John Wesley in the Christian Tradition: A Selected Bibliography." In *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*, edited by Kenneth E. Rowe, 134–59. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976.
- Orcibal, Jean. "The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality." In *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol. I, edited by R. E. Davies and E. G. Rupp, 83–111. London: Epworth Press, 1965.
- Outler, Albert C. "A New Future for Wesley Studies: An Agenda for 'Phase III.'" In *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, 125–44. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991.
- . "Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?" In *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, 211–26. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991.
- . "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition." In *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, edited by Thomas C. Oden

and Leicester R. Longden, 75–96. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991.

———. "Towards a Re-Appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian." In *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, 39–54. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1991.

Rack, Henry D. "Doctors, Demons, and Early Methodist Healing." In *The Church and Healing*, edited by William Sheils, 137–52. Oxford: The Ecclesiastical History Society, 1982.

Edited Books

Collins, Kenneth J., and John H. Tyson, eds. *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Jackson, Thomas, ed. *The Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980.

Job, Rueben P., ed. *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.

Articles

Arnett, William M. "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Entire Sanctification in the Writings of John Wesley." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, no. 2 (1979): 15–30.

———. "Study in John Wesley's Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8 (1973): 14–32.

Baker, Frank. "Birth of John Wesley's Journal." *Methodist History* 8 (1970): 25–32.

———. "Eye-Witnesses to Early Methodism" [representative extracts from John Wesley, 1725–1785]. *Methodist History* 28, no. 2 (1990): 92–103.

———. "John Wesley and Practical Divinity." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 1 (1987): 7–15.

———. "Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works." *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 36 (1971): 87–99.

———. "Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works." *Methodist History* 8 (1970): 41–48.

- . "Practical Divinity - John Wesley's Doctrinal Agenda for Methodism." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 1 (1987): 7–16.
- Baker, Frank, ed. "Wesley and Miss Mary Clark of Worcester." *Methodist History* 10 (1972): 45–51.
- Barton, J. Hamby. "Double Letter John Wesley and Thomas Coke to Freeborn Garrettson." *Methodist History* 17 (1978): 59–63.
- . "The Two Versions of the First Edition of John Wesley's 'The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America.'" *Methodist History* 23, no. 3 (1985): 153–62.
- Bell, Richard J. "Our People Die Well: Deathbed Scenes in John Wesley's Arminian Magazine." *Mortality* 10, no. 3 (2005): 210–23.
- Bible, Ken. "The Wesley's Hymns on Full Redemption and Pentecost: A Brief Comparison." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 17, no. 2 (1982): 79–87.
- Blankenship, Paul Freeman. "The Significance of John Wesley's Abridgement of the Thirty-Nine Articles as Seen from His Deletions." *Methodist History* 2, no. 3 (1964): 35–47.
- Blevins, Dean G. "Means of Grace: Towards a Wesleyan Praxis of Spiritual Formation." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 1 (1997): 69–84.
- Borgen, Ole E. "No End without the Means: John Wesley and the Sacraments." *The Asbury Theological Journal* 46, no. 1 (1991): 63–85.
- Brockwell, Charles W. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (1983): 18–32.
- Campbell, Ted A. "John Wesley and Conyers Middleton on Divine Intervention in History." *Church History* 55, no. 1 (1986): 39–49.
- Cannon, William R. "Methodism—Our Theology." *Asbury Seminary Journal* 40, no. 2 (1985): 3–9.
- Carter, Kelly D. "The High Church Roots of John Wesley's Appeal to Primitive Christianity." *Restoration Quarterly* 37 (1995): 65–79.
- Carver, Frank G. "Biblical Foundations for the 'Secondness' of Entire Sanctification." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 2 (1987): 7–23.
- Cecil, Robert. "Holy Dying: Evangelical Attitudes to Death." *History Today* 32 (1982): 30–34.
- Chamberlain, Jeffrey S. "Moralism, Justification, and the Controversy over Methodism." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993): 652–78.
- Collins, Kenneth J. "The Continuing Significance of Aldersgate [response to 'John Wesley against Aldersgate' by T W Jennings, 8:3–22 1988; rejoinder, 100–105]." *Quarterly Review* 8 (1988): 90–99.

- . "John Wesley's Assessment of Christian Mysticism." *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 28, no.4 (1993): 299–318.
- . "John Wesley's Correspondence with His Father." *Methodist History* 26, no. 1 (1987): 15–26.
- . "John Wesley's Critical Appropriation of Early German Pietism." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27, no. 1 and 2 (1992): 57–92.
- . "John Wesley and the Means of Grace." *The Drew Gateway* 56, no. 3 (1986): 26–33.
- . "John Wesley's Relationship with His Wife as Revealed in His Correspondence." *Methodist History* 32, no. 1 (1993): 4–18.
- . "John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers and Affections." *Methodist History* 36, no. 3 (1998): 162–75.
- . "The New Creation as a Multivalent Theme in John Wesley's Theology." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37, no. 2 (2002): 77–102.
- . "Real Christianity as Integrating Theme in Wesley's Soteriology: The Critique of a Modern Myth." *The Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (1996): 15–45.
- . "A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory of John Wesley's Practical Theology." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33, no. 1 (1998): 164–84.
- . "Rethinking the Systematic Nature of John Wesley's Theology." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 86, no. 2–3 (2004): 309–30.
- . "The Soteriological Orientation of John Wesley's Ministry to the Poor." *The Asbury Theological Journal* 50, no. 1 (1995): 75–92.
- . "Twentieth-Century Interpretations of John Wesley's Aldersgate Experience: Coherence and Confusion?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 18–31.
- Crow, Earl P. "Wesley and Antinomianism." *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 31 (1966): 10–19.
- Dowdy, Roger. "A Service of Wesley Hymns." *Journal of Church Music* 30 (1988): 5–7.
- English, John C. "John Wesley and His 'Jewish Parishioners': Jewish-Christian Relationships in Savannah, Georgia, 1736–1737." *Methodist History* 36, no. 4 (1998): 220–27.
- Fiddick, Harold G. "The Care of Souls: John Wesley on the Preacher's Work and Ways." *Methodist Recorder* 73, no. 3 (1932): 9.
- Fletcher, John. 1729–1785. "Letters from John Fletcher to John Wesley" [July 4

- 1774, August 14 1774, August 1 1775]. *The Asbury Theological Journal* 53, no. 1 (1998): 91–96.
- Flowers, Margaret G., and Douglas R. Cullum. "A Sometime Diversion: The Hymn Translations and Original Hymns of John Wesley." *Methodist History* 41, no. 1 (2002): 295–308.
- Graham, Fred Kimball. "John Wesley's Choice of Hymn Tunes." *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song* 39 (1988): 29–37.
- Harmon, Nolan B., and John W. Bardsley. "John Wesley and the Articles of Religion." *Religion in Life* 22 (1952–53): 280–91.
- Harper, Steve. "Wesley's Sermons as Spiritual Formation Documents." *Methodist History* 26, no. 3 (1988): 131–38.
- Hawn, C. Michael. "Hymnody for Children, Pt 1." *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song* 36, no. 1 (1985): 19–26.
- Heitzenrater, Richard P. "Oxford Diaries and the First Rise of Methodism." *Methodist History* 12 (1974): 110–35.
- . "An Unpublished Wesley Letter on Health and Ireland." *Methodist History* 27, no. 2 (1989): 119–23.
- . "A Wesley Letter on Deeds, Sashes, and Schedules." *Methodist History* 36, no. 2 (1998): 125–31.
- Hendricks, M. Elton. "John Wesley and Natural Theology." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (1983): 7–17.
- Hynson, Leon O. "John Wesley's Concept of Liberty of Conscience." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (1972): 36–46.
- . "Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 2 (1987): 65–83.
- . "Wesley's 'Thoughts Upon Slavery': A Declaration of Human Rights." *Methodist History* 33, no. 1 (1994): 46–57.
- Jackson, Marion A. "An Analysis of the Source of John Wesley's 'Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God.'" *Methodist History* 30, no. 3 (1992): 176–84.
- Jennings, Theodore W., Jr. "John Wesley against Aldersgate." *Quarterly Review* 8 (1988): 3–22.
- Johnson, Richard O. "The Development of the Love Feast in Early American Methodism." *Methodist History* 19, no. 2 (1981): 67–83.
- King, Rob. "Eastern Patristic Spirit-Christology for Contemporary Wesleyan Faith Practice." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (2003): 103–23.
- Kisker, Scott. "Justified but Unregenerate? The Relationship of Assurance to

- Justification and Regeneration in the Thought of John Wesley." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 28, nos. 1–2 (1993): 44–58.
- Klaiber, Walter Z. "Aus Glauben, Damit Aus Gnaden: Der Grundsatz Paulinischer Soteriologie Und Die Gnadenlehre John Wesleys." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 88, no. 3 (1991): 313–38.
- Knapp, Jeffrey H. "Throwing the Baby out with the Font Water: The Development of Baptismal Practice in the Church of the Nazarene." *Worship* 76, no. 3 (2002): 225–44.
- Knight, Henry H., III. "Love and Freedom 'by Grace Alone' in Wesley's Soteriology: A Proposal for Evangelicals." *Pneuma* 24, no. 1 (2002): 57–67.
- Kurowski, Mark T. "The First Step toward Grace: John Wesley's Use of the Spiritual Homilies of Macarius the Great." *Methodist History* 36, no. 2 (1998): 113–24.
- Langford, Thomas Anderson. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification by Faith." *Bulletin of the United Church of Canada Committee on Archives & History* 29 (1980–82): 47–62.
- Legger, J. Augustin. "Wesley's Place in Catholic Thought." *Constructive Quarterly* 2 (1914): 329–60.
- Lockyer, Thomas F. "Luther and Wesley." *Wesley Historical Society Proceedings* 8 (1911): 61–66.
- Lodahl, Michael E. "The Witness of the Spirit: Questions of Clarification for Wesley's Doctrine of Assurance." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23, nos. 1–2 (1988): 188–97.
- Lyon, Robert W. "Baptism and Spirit-Baptism in the New Testament." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, no. 1 (1979): 14–26.
- MacMillan, Ken. "John Wesley and the Enlightened Historians." *Methodist History* 38, no. 2 (2000): 121–32.
- Maddox, Randy L. "Celebrating Wesley—When?" *Methodist History* 29, no. 2 (1991): 63–75.
- . "Continuing the Conversation." *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (1992): 235–41.
- . "Holiness of Heart and Life: Lessons from North American Methodism." *The Asbury Theological Journal* 50, no. 2 (1995): 151–72.
- . "Kingswood School Library Holdings (Ca.1775)." *Methodist History* 41 no. 1 (2002): 342–70.
- Martin, A. W., Jr. "'Then and Now': Wesley's Notes as a Model for United Methodists Today." *Quarterly Review* 10 (1990): 25–47.

- Maser, Frederick E. "Discovery" [J. Wesley's Authorship of the Poem 'Georgia']. *Methodist History* 21, no. 3 (1983): 169–71.
- . "Discovery" [text of John Wesley's Letter to James Barry, 1778; Methodist Work on the Isle of Man]. *Methodist History* 22, no. 1 (1983): 67–70.
- . "A Discovery That is Not a Discovery and yet Is a Discovery" [letter of J. Wesley to Penelope Newman, April 22, 1775, with text]. *Methodist History* 31, no. 3 (1993): 177–79.
- . "New Notes on an Important Wesley Letter" [to Rev. Samuel Walker, September 3, 1756]. *Methodist History* 31, no. 2 (1993): 118–22.
- . "Researchers Rescue Wesley" [response to excerpt from Hanby letter, 25:256–57 July 1987]. *Methodist History* 26, no. 2 (1988): 127–28.
- . "Something New and Something Old in a Wesley Letter" [to E. Bennis, February 12, 1773]. *Methodist History* 29, no. 1 (1990): 44–46.
- . "An Unpublished Letter of John Wesley to Hannah Ball, March 29, 1769" [commentary by C. A. Green]. *Methodist History* 29, no. 3 (1991): 184–86.
- Matsumoto, Hiroaki. "John Wesley's Understanding of Man." *Wesleyan Quarterly Review* 4 (1967): 83–102.
- McCormack, James T. "The Forgotten Notes of John Wesley." *Irish Biblical Studies* 8 (1986): 22–42.
- McDonald, Fredrick W. "John Wesley the Theologian." *Methodist Recorder* 31 (1891): 257.
- McGonigle, Herbert. "Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8 (1973): 61–72.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. "Poverty, Human Depravity, and Prevenient Grace." *Quarterly Review* 16 (1996): 343–60.
- Nicholson, Roy S. "The Holiness Emphasis in Wesleys' Hymns." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 5, no.1 (1970): 13–22.
- Noll, Mark A. "John Wesley and the Doctrine of Assurance." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975): 161–77.
- Noro, Yoshio. "Wesley's Theological Epistemology." *The Iliff Review* 28 (1971): 59–67.
- O'Malley, J. Steven. "Pietistic Influence on John Wesley: Wesley and Gerhard Tersteegen." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (1996): 48–70.
- Oswalt, John N. "John Wesley and the Old Testament Concept of the Holy Spirit." *Religion in Life* 48 (1979): 283–92.

- Outler, Albert C. "John Wesley as a Theologian: Then as Now." *Methodist History* 12 (1974): 63–82.
- Rack, Henry D. "John Wesley: Journals and Diaries" [starting with oneself: spiritual confessions, pt 6]. *Expository Times* 101 (1990): 228–31.
- Richardson, N. S. "John Wesley on Separation from the Church." *American Quarterly Church Review* 14 (1861): 63–74.
- Rogal, Samuel J. "John Wesley's Arminian Magazine." *Andrew University Seminary Studies* 22 (1984): 231–47.
- . "John Wesley's Journal: Prescriptions for the Social, Spiritual and Intellectual Ills of Britain's Middle Class." *Andrew University Seminary Studies* 26 (1988): 33–42.
- . "Scripture Quotation in Wesley's Earnest Appeal." *Research Studies* 47 (1979): 181–88.
- Ruth, Lester. "A Little Heaven Below: The Love Feast and Lord's Supper in Early American Methodism." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 2 (1997): 59–79.
- Simon, John Smith. "Mr. Wesley's Notes Upon the New Testament." *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 9 (1914): 97–104.
- Smith, H. L. "Wesley's Doctrine of Justification; Beginning and Process." *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 28 (1963): 88–98.
- Smith, Timothy L. "Chronological List of John Wesley's Sermons and Doctrinal Essays." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 17, no. 2 (1982): 88–110.
- . "The Holy Spirit in the Hymns of the Wesleys" [reply, T C Mitchell, pp 48–57]. *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16, no. 2 (1981): 20–47.
- . "John Wesley and the Second Blessing." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21, nos. 1–2 (1986): 137–58.
- . "Whitefield and Wesley on Righteousness by Grace." *TSF Bulletin* 9, no. 4 (1986): 5–8. Stanley, F. L., ed. "John Wesley, an Unpublished Letter." *Methodist History* 4 (1965): 59–60.
- Tan, Seng-Kong. "The Doctrine of the Trinity in John Wesley's Prose and Poetic Works." *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 7 (2002).
- Thorsen, Donald A. "Experimental Method in the Practical Theology of John Wesley" [Anglican and British empirical roots]. *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 117–41.
- Tracy, Wesley D. "John Wesley, Spiritual Director: Spiritual Guidance in Wesley's Letters" [letters to Anne Bolton]. *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23, nos. 1–2 (1988): 148–62.

- Tripp, David H. " 'Observe the Gradation!' John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament." *Quarterly Review* 10 (1990): 49–64.
- . "'Standard Sermons': History for History's Sake, Denominational Manifesto, Doctrinal 'Standard.'" *Asbury Theological Journal* 56–57 no. 2-1 (Fall-Spr 2001-2002): 97–116.
- Vickers, J. A. "Gibbes Family of Hilton Park; an Unpublished Correspondence of John Wesley." *Methodist History* 6 (1968): 43–61.
- Vickers, John A. "Lambeth Palace Library; Some Items of Methodist Interest from the Fullman Papers." *Methodist History* 9 (1971): 22–29.
- . "A New Whitefield Letter" [to J. Wesley; text]. *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 48 (1992): 119–22.
- Wainwright, Geoffrey. "The Assurance of Faith: A Methodist Approach to the Question Raised by the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Infallibility." *One In Christ: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* 22, no. 1 (1986): 44–61.
- . "Rechtfertigung: Lutherisch Oder Katholisch?" *Kerygma und Dogma* 45 (1999): 182–206.
- Walls, Jerry L. "As the Waters Cover the Sea: John Wesley on the Problem of Evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996): 534–62.
- Warner, Lacey. "Towards a Wesleyan Evangelism." *Methodist History* 40 no. 4 J (2002): 230–45.
- Watson, David Lowes. "The Much-Controverted Point of Justification by Faith and the Shaping of Wesley's Evangelical Message." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21, nos. 1–2 (1986): 7–23.
- Wesley, John. "John Wesley and Robert Hall Junior" [letter of July 7, 1789]. *Methodist History* 8 (1969): 87.
- Whidden, Woodrow W. "Wesley on Imputation: A Truly Reckoned Reality or Antinomian Polemical Wreckage?" *The Asbury Theological Journal* 52, no. 2 (1997): 63–70.
- White, Charles E. "John Wesley's Use of Church Discipline." *Methodist History* 29 (1991): 112–18.
- Williams, A. H. "John Wesley's Preferment to St Daniel's Church, near Pembroke." *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 48 (1992): 155.

Dissertations

- Blaising, Craig Alan. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Original Sin." Thesis, Dallas

- Theological Seminary, 1979.
- Brendlinger, Irv A. "A Study of the Views of Major Eighteenth Century Evangelicals on Slavery and Race, with Special Reference to John Wesley." Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1982.
- Crow, Earl P. "John Wesley's Conflict with Antinomianism in Relation to the Moravians and Calvinists." Dissertation, The University of Manchester, Manchester, England, 1964.
- Eicken, Erich Von. "Rechtfertigung Und Heiligung Bei Wesley Dargestellt Unter Vergleichung Mit Anschauungen Luthers Und Des Luthertums." Dissertation, Heidelberg, 1934.
- Fujimoto, Mitsuru S. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Good Works." Dissertation, Drew University, 1986.
- Gray, Wallace G. "The Place of Reason in the Theology of John Wesley." Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1953.
- Heitzenrater, Richard Paul. "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists." Dissertation, Duke University, 1972.
- Im, Seung-An. "John Wesley's Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Tension between the Latin Western Patristic Tradition (Augustine) and the Greek Eastern Patristic Tradition (Gregory of Nyssa)." Dissertation, Drew University, 1994.
- Kim, Kwang Yul. "A Tension between the Desire to Follow the Example of Jesus' Life and the Desire to Trust in His Redemptive Work: The Theology of John Wesley Reflected in His Christian Library." Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1992.
- Leupp, Roderick Thomas. "The Art of God: Light and Darkness in the Thought of John Wesley." Dissertation, Drew University, 1985.
- Matthews, Rex D. "Religion and Reason Joined: A Study in the Theology of John Wesley." Thesis, Harvard University, 1986.
- Mercer, Jerry L. "A Study of the Concept of Man in the Sermons of John Wesley." Dissertation, Claremont University, 1970.
- Meredith, Lawrence. "Essential Doctrine in the Theology of John Wesley, with Special Attention to the Methodist Standards of Doctrine." Thesis, Harvard University, 1962.
- Moore, Don Marselle. "Immediate Perceptual Knowledge of God: A Study in the Epistemology of John Wesley." Thesis, Syracuse University, 1993.
- Rogers, Charles A. "The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley." Dissertation, Duke University, 1967.

- Shimizu, Mitsuo. "Epistemology in the Thought of John Wesley." Dissertation, Drew University, 1980.
- Snyder, Howard Albert. "Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism as Renewal Movements: A Comparative and Thematic Study." Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Notre Dame, 1983.
- Thomas, Howe O. "John Wesley's and Rudolf Bultmann's Understanding of Justification by Faith Compared and Contrasted." Dissertation, University of Bristol, 1990.
- Townsend, James Arthur. "Feelings Related to Assurance in Charles Wesley's Hymns." Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979.
- Walker, G. Clinton III. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification in Relation to Two Classical Anglican Theologians: Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrews." Baylor University, 1993.

For the sake of space I have not listed two categories of materials that were employed in this study: first, several non-Methodist resources that support the text; second, the array of resources employed in the "Today and Tomorrow" sections. For both of these materials, the reader should consult the endnotes of each chapter.

Index

a parte ante

a parte post

AbelardPeter

abortion

Abraham

acceptance

Acts

actualization

Adam*imago Dei* andoriginal sin and temptation and

Adams,Fred

Adler,Mortimer

African Americans

after-knowledge

Age of Reason

alcohol

Allah

Alpha

AmbroseSaint

Anabaptist

Ananias

Andrews, Lancelot

Anglicans; baptism and; ongrace

Annals of the Old and New Testament (Ussher)

annihilation

annus mirabilis

Anselm

Ante-Nicene Fathers

antinomianism

Aphorisms of Justification (Baxter)

apostles, faith of

ApostlesCreed

AquinasThomas

Arianism

Aristotle

Arius
Arminianism; onprevenience
Arminius, Jacob
Arndt, Johann
Articles of Religion
arts of holy living
assurance: of faith; of Holy Spirit; of hope
astronomy
Astro-theology (Derham)
Athanasian Creed
atheists
atonement; Jesus Christ as;
AugustineSaint; ongrace; ontime
Augustinians; pessimism of
AuthorGod as
avarice
"AwakeThou That Sleepest"(WesleyC.)
Azusa Street Revival

BakerFrank
baptism; Anglicans and; Catholics and; Church of England and; Holy Ghost and
 regeneration and, sacrament of
Baptism of Holy Spirit
Bardsley, Samuel
Basil the Great
Baxter, Richard
Bebbington, David
Beckerlegge, Oliver A.
Bellarmine, Robert
Bence, Clarence
Benedictine Rule
Bengel, Johann, Albrecht
Bennet, John
Benson, Joseph
Bentham, Jeremy
Berger, Peter

Bible; onjustification
Biden, Joseph
big bang
birth
Bishop, Mary
black holes
blasphemy; predestination as
A Blow at the Root: or Christ Stabbed in the House of Friends (WesleyJ.)
body
Boehm,Anthony William
Boehme,Jakob
Bohler, Peter, new birth; *sola fide* and
Bolton, Ann
Bolzius, Johann, Martian
The Bondage of the Will (Luther)
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich
The Book of Common Prayer
Borgen, Ole
Bosanquet, Mary
BrackenburyR.C.
Bray, John
bread
Brevint, Daniel
Brianchaninov, Ignatius
Brooke, Henry
Brown, Dale
Browne, E.H.
Brunner, Emil
Buddeus, Johann, Franz
Bull, Thomas
Bushnell, Horace

Calvin, John ; ongrace; onHoly Trinity; onjustification ; redemption and
Calvinists antinomianism of; ongrace; onoriginal sin; onpredestination
Cambridge Platonists
Campbell, Ted A.

Canales, Arthur
Cannon, William
Cappadocian Fathers
Caroline Divines
Cassian, John
Castaniza-Scupoli
Catholics; baptism and grace and Pentecostals and transubstantiation and
Cell George Croft ; on grace
Cennick, John
Chamberlain, Jeffrey S.
"The Character of a Methodist" (Wesley J.)
charity
children, faith of
Christ. See Jesus Christ christening
A Christian Library (Wesley J.)
Christian life
Christian Nurture (Bushnell)
Christian perfection
Christian Perfection (Law)
"Christian Perfection" (Wesley J.)
Christianity as Old as Creation (Tindal)
Christianity Not Mysterious (Toland)
Christology
Christus sacrae scripturae nucleus (Francke)
Chrysostom, Saint
church: Christian life in; in decline, German pietists and; grace through;
 infrastructure of; Moravianism and; reform of; Reformation and sacrament
 and
Church of England; baptism and; on faith
Church, Thomas
"The Circumcision of the Heart" (Wesley J.)
Clement of Alexandria;
Cobb, John
A Collection of Hymns of the People Called Methodists (Wesley J.)
collegia pietatis
Collins, Michael H.
Colossians

Commandments

Commentary; on Romans (Abelard)

communion

Concerning Human Understanding (Locke)

"Concerning the Sacraments, It Is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ"(Brevint)

conscience: guilt of Holy Spirit and

Constantine (emperor)

conversion

co-operant grace ; millennialism and ordo salutis and

Copernicus

cor incurvatum in se

Corinthians

Corinthians

corruption of humanity

Coughlan Laurence

Council of Carthage

Council of Nicaea

Council of Trent

Cox, Harvey

Cragg, Gerald R.

Crane, Thomas

Cranmer, Thomas

creation: date of: doctrine of ; invisible, visible

Creator, God as;

creatures

Cromwell Oliver

Cur Deus Homo (Anselm)

Cushman, Robert E.

Cyprian, Saint

Cyril of Alexandria

Dale, Peggy

damnation

Davenport, Thomas

David (King)

Davies, Rupert E.
d;Avila, Don Juan
Dayton, Donald
death; eschatology and; fear of intermediate state and; of Jesus Christ as
punishment sin and
"The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart"(WesleyJ.)
Deed of Declaration
Deism
Delight and Judgment (Horneck)
depravity;
deprecation
Derham, William
Descartes, Rene
Deschner, John;
desire, of flesh
determinism
devil, faith and; image of, See also Hades; hell; Satan
Dieter, Melvin
direct witness;
"Directions given to the Band Societies"(WesleyJ.)
discipleship;
disobedience
divine priority
divine/human correspondence
The Doctrine of Original Sin (WesleyJ.)
Dodd, William
douleia (veneration);
Downes, John;
Drinan, Robert;
Dunning, H. Ray
"The Duty of Constant Communion"(WesleyJ.)

An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion (WesleyJ.)
earthquakes
Eastern Fathers;; ongrace; original sin and
Eastern Orthodoxy Pentecostals and
ecclesia Anglicana

ecclesiola in ecclesia

Einstein; Albert

election;

Empedocles

empowerment;

"The End of Christ;s Coming"(WesleyJ.)

Enlightenment

An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (Hume)

Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared (Lavington)

entire sanctification. See sanctification Ephesians :

Erasmus

eschatology; death and; discipleship and; final justification and; intermediate state and; millennialism and; new creation and; reign of God and resurrection and; revivalism and; service and;

Eternal One

eternity: of God; of time

Eucharist;

Eusebius of Caesarea

Euthyphro (Plato)

evangelical repentance;

Eve; original sin and; temptation and

evil

ex nihilo

ex opere operato

existentialism;

Exodus :

expanding universe

experimental divinity

external temptation

faith of apostles assurance of; of children Church of England on; devil and free grace and in Jesus Christ; justification by; love and Luther and naked; origins of; salvation by; sanctification and; simple; worship and

faithless generation

false self

A Farther Appeal (WesleyJ.) ;

fasting
favor; undeserved
Felix Culpa;
Felleman Laura Bartels
fiducia (hearty trust)
filioque clause;
final justification;
Finnis, John
Fire from Heaven (Fox)
First Letter of John
"The First-fruits of the Spirit"(WesleyJ.)
flesh, desire of
Fletcher, John;
foreknowledge
forgiveness; of Jesus Christ; justification and; redemption and for sins
Foterhingham, David
Foucault, Michel
Francke, August Hermann ;
Free Church
free grace; faith and
"Free Grace"(WesleyJ.)
free will, Holy Spirit and
freedom; from guilt ; of humanity from sin
Friedman; Alexander
Funnell; Thomas
Furly; Dorothy

Gabriel (angel)
Galatians
galaxies
Galilei, Galileo
Gamow, George
"The General Delusion of Christians with regard to Prophecy;"
"General Spread of the Gospel"(WesleyJ.)
general theory of relativity
Genesis

George III (King)

German Pietists; church and; new birth and;

GibbonGeorge

Gill, Jerry

glossolalia. See speaking in tongues

God: the Almighty anger of as Author; as Creator; eternity of; foreknowledge of as giver; goodness of as Governor; grace of holiness of; of holy love ; image of; as love; moral image of; obedience to; omnipotence of; omnipresence of; omniscience of; perfection of; personal attributes of; predestination and; as Preserver; as providential provider; reign of; righteousness of; as sovereign; throne of; transcendence of; wisdom of; works of; wrath of . *See also* Godhead; Holy One Jehovah; Most High

God the Father

Godhead

"God;s Love to Fallen Man"(WesleyJ.)

"The Good Steward"(WesleyJ.)

good works sinners and

goodness of God

Goodwin, John

Gospel of James

Gospel of Thomas

Governor, God as;

grace ; actualization of; Anglicans; Augustine on; through; baptism; Calvin on; Calvinists on; catholic nature of; Catholics on; through church; definition of; favor of; of God; as God`s gift ; holy love and ; Holy Spirit and; irresistible; Luther; onmeans of; new birth and; normed perceptibility of; Pietists; onprevenient; Protestant Protestant Reformers; onprudential means of Puritans; onReformation and responsible restoration of salvation and sanctification and; second blessing of sovereign . *See also* co-operant gracefree graceresponsible grace

grand stumbling block

gratia infusa

gravity

"The Great Delusion;"

"The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God"(WesleyJ.)

Green, William

Gregory of Nyssa

Gribbin, John
Griffiths, John
Gronau, Israel Christian
The Grounds and Reasons of Christian Perfection (WesleyJ.)
guilt of conscience; freedom from ; of sin

Hades
hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca)
Halle Pietists
Halley, Edmund
happiness
The Happy Ascetik (Horneck)
Hardy, Elizabeth
Harmonia Apostolica (Bull)
hatred
Hawkesworth, John
Hawking, Stephen
heathens
"Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations"(WesleyJ.)
Hebblethwaite, Margaret
Hebrews
Heisenberg principle of uncertainty
Heitzenrater, Richard P.
hell
Hemingway, Ernest
Henderson, D. Michael
Herschel, William
Hervey, Jams
Hilary of Poitiers, Saint
Hildebrandt, Franz
Hill, Rowland
Hippo, Bishop of
historiography
holiness; of God; as holy love
Holy Ghost; baptism and
holy love; community of; empowerment and; favor and; of God; grace and ; as

holiness; Holy Spirit as; Holy Trinity and; humanity in; Jesus Christ and; law and; practical theology and; receiving of; synergism and;
Holy One as Immanuel justification by;
Holy Spirit; as administrator of redemption; assurance of; baptism of; communication by; conscience and; free will and; grace and; as holy love; justification and; moral law and; power of; purifying efficacy of; regeneration through, 280; as Sanctifier; as Spirit of Truth; witness of. See also Holy Ghost; regeneration
holy tempers
Holy Trinity; Calvin, John on; filioque clause with; holy love and; redemption and
"Homily; on Salvation"(Cranmer)
Hooker Richard
hope assurance of;
Horace
Horne, Melville
Horneck, Anthony
Hubble constant
Hubble, Edwin
humanity: accursed state of affections of; anger of as complex beings; corruption of fall of; in holy love; knowingness of original sin of; righteousness of total depravity of; wickedness of
Hume, David
humility
hurricanes
Hymns; on the Lord's Supper (Wesley J. and Wesley C.)
"Hypocrisy in Oxford"(Wesley J.)

idolatry
Ignatius Brianchaninov Saint
image(s): of devil of God; moral political. *See also* idolatry
"The Image of God"(Wesley J.)
imagination
imago Dei Adam and natural law and
imago diaboli
Imitation of Christ (Kempis)

immanence

Immanuel, Holy One as

immortality, of soul

Imputatio Fidei (Goodwin)

imputation;

"In What Sense We are to Leave the World"(WesleyJ.)

inanimate objects

Incarnation

indirect witness

infinity: of God of space;

Institutes (Calvin)

intercession

intermediate state: death and; eschatology and;

irresistible grace;

Isaiah: : :

Islam: five pillars of. See also Qur'an "An Israelite Indeed"(WesleyJ.)

James, William;

Jehovah

Jenkins, Philip

Jeremiah :

Jesus Christ: as atonement; death of; divine nature of; faith in forgiveness of; holy love and; human nature of; as king; as Lawgiver love in mercy through; as Messiah millennial reign of; obedience to; as Preserver as priest; as prophet; as Redeemer redemption from; resurrection of; righteousness of; sacrifice of; salvation from; as Saviour as

Jesus Christ—continued Son of God; as Son of Humanity; as the Word work of;

JobRueben P.

John

John

John Paul II (pope)

John the Baptist

John XXIII (pope)

"The Joint Declaration; on the Doctrine of Justification;"

Jones, E. Stanley

Joseph

judgment;

justice

justification ; acceptance and; Bible; onCalvin; on; co-operant grace and; by faith; final; forgiveness and; free grace and; as freedom from guilt; gift of; by Holy One; Holy Spirit and imputation and; Luther on; Protestant Reformers on; regeneration and; repentance and; salvation and; sanctification and of sinners *sola fide* and; . *See also* forgiveness

"Justification by Faith"(WesleyJ.)

Kant, Immanuel

Keene, Arthur

Kempis, Thomas a

Kierkegaard, Soren

King, Martin Luther Jr.

knowingness; of humanity

Knox, John

Kung, Hans ;

Labadie, Jean de

Land, Steven

Latitudinarianism

latria (worship of God)

Laud, William

Lavington, George (bishop)

law; accusatory role of; holy love and; prescriptive role of; transgression of. *See also* moral law; natural law

Law, William

Lawgiver; Jesus Christ as

Lawson, John

lay preachers

Lectures; onRomans (Luther)

legal repentance;

LemaitreAbbe Georges

Lesser, Theophilus

A Letter to a Roman Catholic (WesleyJ.)

Letters
LewisC.S.
liberty
Lindstrom, Harald
Locke, John
Lodahl, Michael
Logos
Lonergan, Bernard
Long, Stephen
Lopez, Gregory
"The Lord of Our Righteousness"(WesleyJ.)
Lord of the universe
Lord`s Prayer
Lord`s Supper; sacrament of;
love: faith and; God as; holy law of; new birth and; origins of temptation and of
world. See also holy love
love feast
Lucifer
Luckman, Thomas
Luke
Lundberg, Matthew
lust
Luther, Martin ; onfaith;; ongrace; onjustification; redemption and
Lutheran Pietists
Lutherans

Macarius
Maddox, Randy L. ;
Magisterial Reformers
Magus, Simon
Mahometans
Maker
Manductio ad Lectionen scripturae sacrae (Francke)
"The Marks of the New Birth"(WesleyJ.)
marriage
Martin, Bernice

Mary (mother of Jesus) in Qur'an;
Mather, Cotton
Matthew
Maxfield, Thomas
McDonald, Frederick
Mediated Transcendence (Gill)
meditation
Melkites
Menendez-Swensen, Kristin
mercy; through Jesus Christ; of Most High; works of
merit;
Merryweather, George
Merton, Thomas
Messiah; Jesus Christ as
meteors
Methodism; American; British; fanaticism of
Methodist Articles (Wesley J.)
Methodist church. See church
Methodist Conference of
Middle Ages
Milky Way
Mill, John Stuart
millennialism;
"Minuten Begnadigung" (Zinzendorf)
modus ponens
Molther, Philip Henry
monophysitism
Montanists;
moral image; of God
moral law; Holy Spirit and; sin and;
moralism
Moravian Brethren
Moravians; church and
Moses
Most High; blessings of; mercy of; rebellion against
mubarak (the blessed One)
Muhammad; as Jesus Christ parallel

mystery of iniquity
"The Mystery of Iniquity"(WesleyJ.)

NaglerArthur
naked faith
natural law; *imago Dei* and
The NatureDesignand the General Rules of the United Societies (WesleyJ.);
"The Nature of Enthusiasm"(WesleyJ.)
Nazianzus, Gregory
Nestorians
new birth ; Bohler and; conversion and; Francke and; German Pietists and; grace
and; love and; regeneration and;
"The New Birth"(WesleyJ.)
new creation;
"The New Creation"(WesleyJ.)
Newton, Isaac
Newton, John
The Next Christendom (Jenkins)
Nicodemus
Nicodemus (Francke)
Nietzsche, Friedrich
Nieuentyt, Bernard
nihilism
Noll, Mark
Norris, John
Notes Upon the New Testament (WesleyJ.)

obedience: to God to Jesus Christ
Oden, Thomas C.
"Of Faith in the Holy Trinity;"
"Of Former Times"(WesleyJ.)
"Of the Church"(WesleyJ.)
Old Testament
Olivers, Thomas
Omega

omnipotence, of God;
omnipresence, of God;
omniscience, of God
"On Conscience"(WesleyJ.)
"On Dissipation"(WesleyJ.)
"On Divine Providence"(WesleyJ.)
"On Eternity"(WesleyJ.)
"On Faith"(WesleyJ.)
"On Knowing Christ after the Flesh"(WesleyJ.)
"On Sin in Believers"(WesleyJ.)
On the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice (Brevint)
On the Construction of the Heavens (Herschel)
"On the Discoveries of Faith"(WesleyJ.)
"On the Fall of Man"(WesleyJ.)
"On the Image of God"(WesleyJ.)
On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres (Copernicus)
"On the Wedding Garment"(WesleyJ.)
"On Visiting the Sick"(WesleyJ.)
"On Working Out Our Own Salvation"(WesleyJ.)
"On Zeal"(WesleyJ.)
OordThomas
"Ordnung Gottes"(Francke)
ordo salutis ; grace and prevenience and reversal of
Origen
The Origin of Image Worship Among Christians (WesleyJ.)
original sin; Adam and Calvinists; onEastern Fathers and; Eve and
"Original Sin"(WesleyJ.)
Oswalt, John;
Outler, Albert; on free will; on justification; on *ordo salutis*; onperfection ; on
sin
Ozman, Agnes

paganism
pantheism
Parham, Charles Fox
partiality

Paul, Saint
Pearson, John
Pelagian optimism
Pelagius
Pentecost, day of
Pentecostals; Catholics and; Eastern Orthodoxy and; Protestantism and
perfection; Christian; sinless
perichoresis
Perronet, Charles
perseverance
1 Peter
petition
Philippians
Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica (Newton, I.)
Philosophical Fragments (Kierkegaard)
Pia Desideria (Spener)
Pietas Hallensis (Francke)
Pietists; onfaith; ongrace Reformed Wurttenberger. See also German
PietistsHalle Pietists
A Plain Account of Christian Perfection (WesleyJ.) ;
Plain Account of the People Called Methodists (WesleyJ.)
Planck time
Plato
Platonists
political image
politics; preaching of
Porter, Jean
postmodernism
potentia absoluta
potentia ordinata
poverty of spirit
practical divinity
practical theology;
predestination; as blasphemy Calvinism; on
Predestination Calmly Considered (WesleyJ.);
Preserver: God as Jesus Christ as
prevenience; Arminianism; onAugustine; onCalvinists; onirresistible;

pride
priest, Jesus Christ as;
Primitive Physic (WesleyJ.);
primum mobile
The Principles of a Methodist (WesleyJ.) ;
The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained (WesleyJ.)
pro me
promise-mongers
prophet, Jesus Christ as
A Prospect of Divine Providence (Crane)
Protestant Reformers; ongrace; onjustification;
Protestantism, Pentecostals and
providential provider, God as;
Psalm
Pseudo-Macarius
Ptolemy
punishment death as
purgatory
Puritans; ; ongrace

Qur;an; Allah hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca); Mary (mother of Jesus) in;
Muhammad; rasul (messenger); salat (prayers); shahadah (witnessing); zakah
(alms)
rasul (messenger)
Rattenbury, J. Ernest
Ray, John
"A Rebirth of Being ;Born Again;"(Canales)
Redeemer; Jesus Christ as
redemption; forgiveness and; Holy Trinity; and from Jesus Christ
Reformation; church and; faith and; grace and; *sola fide* and
Reformation Anglicanism
Reformed Pietists
regeneration; baptism and; gift of; through Holy Spirit justification and; new
birth and;
Remarks; ona Defence of Aspasio Vindicated (WesleyJ.)
"Remarks; onMr. Hill;s Review"(WesleyJ.)

remembrance of wrongs

Renty, Marquis de

repentance; evangelical; sanctification and; works for;

"The Repentance of Believers"(WesleyJ.)

res

res cogitans

res extensa

responsible grace

resurrection: eschatology and; of Jesus Christ

Revelation

revivalism

"The Reward of Righteousness"(WesleyJ.)

Reynolds, Edward

riches

righteousness; of God; of humanity; of Jesus Christ; self

"The Righteousness of Faith"(WesleyJ.)

Ritchie, Elizabeth

robbing the poor

"Rock of Ages"(Toplady)

Roe, Hester Ann

Rogers, Charles

Roman Catholics. See Catholics

Romans

Roncalli, Angelo

Rorty, Richard

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques

Rules and Exercises of Holy Living (TaylorJeremy)

Rules for Holy Dying (TaylorJeremy)

Rules of the Band Societies (WesleyJ.)

Runyon, Theodore H.

Rupp, E. Gordon

Rutter, Sarah

Sabbath

sacrament: of Baptism; church and; of Lord;s Supper;

sacrifice, of Jesus Christ

salat (prayers)
SalkeldJane
salvation; by faith; grace and; from Jesus Christ; justification and; of sinners
"Salvation by Faith"(WesleyJ.)
Salzburgers
sanctification; assurance of faith and; faith and; grace and; through Holy Ghost
justification and repentance and;
Sanctifier, Holy Spirit as
Sandage, Steven
Sanders, E.P.;
Sapphira
Satan
Savage, Sara
Saviour, Jesus Christ as
Schmidt, Martin
"Scriptural Christianity"(WesleyJ.)
"The Scripture Way of Salvation"(WesleyJ.) ;
second blessing of grace
Second Council of Orange
secret anger
secundum merita operum
self; false
self-justification
self-knowledge
self-righteousness
self-temptation
self-will
Sermon; onthe Mount
Sermons onSeveral Occasions (WesleyJ.)
service
sex
Seymour, William J.
shahadah (witnessing)
Shirley, Walter
signum
simple faith
sin(s); death and; dominion over; forgiveness for; freedom from; guilt of; inbred;

moral law and; natural propensity for; regeneration of; total death to, See also
original sin
"Sin in Believers"(WesleyJ.)
sinless perfection
sinners; calling of; disobedience of; good works and, to Jesus Christ;
justification of; salvation of; as sleepers; transformation of
The Sirenes (Horneck)
siyyam (fasting)
Skinner, B.F.
slavery;
Smedes, Lewis B.
Smith, Adam
Smith, John
Snyder, Howard
Society for Prompting Christian Knowledge (SPCK)
Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG)
Society for the Reformation of Manners
Socinianism
Socor, Barbara J.
sola fide; Bohler and; justification and; Reformation and
sola gratia
solafidianism
Son of God; Jesus Christ as
Son of Humanity
soul: healing of; immortality of
sovereign; God as;
sovereign grace
space, infinity of;
space-time
Spangenberg, August
SPCK. See Society for Prompting Christian Knowledge
speaking in tongues (glossolalia)
Spener, Philipp Jacob ;
SPG. See Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
"The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption"(WesleyJ.)
The Spirit of Prayer (WesleyJ.)
Spirit of Truth, Holy Spirit as

"Spiritual Worship"(WesleyJ.)

Starkey, Lycurgus

Stoll, Joachim

Stuart, Mary

Sunday Service (WesleyJ.)

Sung-Duk Lee

Supreme Being

A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation: Or a Compendium of Natural Philosophy (WesleyJ.)

Synan, Vincent

synergism;

Synod of Orange

Syrus, Ephraem

Tappert, Theodore G.

Tarturus

Taylor, Jeremy; ondeath; onlove; onpardon of sins

Taylor, John

Taylor, Richard

Telford, John

temptation;

Ten Commandments

Tersteegen, Gerhard

tertius usus

thanksgiving

theologia gloriae

theologia naturalis

A Theology of Love (Wynkoop)

therapeia psuches

Therese of Lisieux

Third Council of Toledo

Thirty-nine Articles ; onjustification; onoriginal sin; onprevenience

Thomas, Clarence

Thorsen, Donald

"Thoughts Concerning Gospel Ministers"(WesleyJ.)

Thoughts; onChrist;s Imputed Righteousness (WesleyJ.)

"Thoughts Upon God;s Sovereignty"(WesleyJ.)

"Thoughts Upon Necessity"(WesleyJ.)

"Thoughts Upon Slavery"(WesleyJ.)

throne, of God

Tillich, Paul

Tillotson, John

time

1 Timothy :

Tindal, Matthew

Toland, John

Tompson, Richard

Toplady, Augustus

total depravity;

transcendence, of God

transformation

transubstantiation

Trapp, Joseph

Treatise Against the Fear of Man (Francke)

Trinity. See Holy Trinity

Triune. See Holy Trinity

The True Original of the Soule (Woolnor)

Tucker, Josiah

Turner, George

Tutu, Desmond

unalterable rectitude

uncertainty

understanding. See knowingness

undeserved favor

United Methodist Church. See church

United Society;

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

universalism

universe: expanding Lord of

"Upon Our Lord;s Sermon; onthe Mount, Discourse the First"(WesleyJ.)

"Upon Our Lord;s Sermon; onthe Mount, Discourse the Sixth"(WesleyJ;)

"Upon Our Lord;s Sermon; onthe Mount, Discourse the Third"(WesleyJ.)
"Upon Our Lord;s Sermon; onthe Mount, Discourse the Thirteenth"(WesleyJ.);
"The Use of Money"(WesleyJ.)
Ussher, James;

Valton, John
via negativa
via solutis
virginityof Mary
vital piety
Voltaire
vox populi

Wahres Christenthum (Arndt)
Walker, Peter
"Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith"(WesleyJ.)
"Wandering Thoughts"(WesleyJ.)
Watson, Richard
"Way to the Kingdom"(WesleyJ.)
Wealth of Nations (SmithA.)
Webster, Robert
Weidner, Halbert D.
Wesley, Charles; hymns of
The Wesley Hymns as a Guide to Scriptural Teaching (Lawson)
Wesley, Samuel
Wesley, SamuelSr.
Wesley, Susanna
Weslyan/Higher-Life interdenominational network
Westminster Assembly of Divines
Westminster Confession
"What is Man?"(WesleyJ.)
Wheatly, Charles
Whitefield, George
wickedness, of humanity
Wiedergeburt

Wilberforce, William
Wiley, H. Orton
will . See also self-will
William of Orange
Williams, Colin
wine;
wisdom; of God
witness: direct; of Holy Spirit indirect
"The Witness of Our Own Spirit"(WesleyJ.)
"The Witness of the SpiritI"(WesleyJ.)
Wolf, Erik
Woolnor, Henry
the Word Jesus Christ as
works: of God, of mercyfor repentance. See also good works
worship, faith and
wrath, of God
Wurttemberger Pietists
Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs

Yancey, Philip

zakah (alms)
zero sum world
Zinzendorf, Nicolas Ludwig vin (count)

"Kenneth Collins is a veteran reader and interpreter of John Wesley who is fearless in taking Wesley at his word. In this volume he has broken new ground in two ways. On the one hand, he draws Wesley's central themes back into the deep history and faith of the church. On the other, he brings those same themes into conversation with the contemporary scene. The result is a fresh and illuminating approach to Wesley and his relevance for today."

—**William J. Abraham**, Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies, Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

"Probing the depth and breadth of Wesley's understanding of the Christian faith and life, Ken Collins presents a fresh interpretation of Wesley's theology for the present and future. Each chapter is packed with insight into the basic Wesleyan theme of God's holy love and our invitation to live in it. This is an informative, practical, and inspirational book."

—**Charles Yrigoyen Jr.**, General Secretary Emeritus, General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church

"This book is far more than a summary of John Wesley's theology. The exposition of Wesley offered here is characterized by a careful and analytical approach as Collins seeks to set forth Wesley's views on free grace, on the 'faith of a servant,' and on many other issues. Along the way, Collins engages in an irenic dialogue with other major interpreters of Wesley as he seeks to underline the importance of some neglected themes."

—**Samuel Powell**, Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Point Loma Nazarene University

"Ken Collins brings together a lifetime of careful scholarship to present the theology of John Wesley in its truly multifaceted, eclectic and conjunctive style—on Wesley's own terms, in his own historical context, and illuminated by his own diverse influences. Contending with more lopsided systematic interpretations in recent scholarship, Collins argues persuasively for an axial theme of 'holiness and grace' in Wesley's practical theology, with 'holy love' as orienting concern and integrating principle. His unflinching desire to account for the true complexity, subtle distinctions and terminological nuances in the primary sources will make this book an invaluable resource in the field of

Wesley studies for a long time to come."

—**Philip R. Meadows**, Director of Postgraduate Studies, Cliff College, England

Table of Contents

The Flow of the Book

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine